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# **THE BOOTSTRAP FALLACY**

## **What the Self-Help Books Don't Tell You**

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**Robert K. Hudnut**

**COLLINS**

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*To Jan*

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# PREFACE

MOST OF US like to achieve. It is a good feeling to "get something done," to "make a contribution," to "leave our mark." It is such a good feeling that it makes us want to achieve more. It is those who achieve more that we call superachievers. This book is dedicated to those people.

## I

It is the thesis of this book that we cannot move from achieving to superachieving except through crisis. We must have an experience of what we cannot do in order to break through to what we can. It is in the crisis of our inability to do anything, or at least not enough, that we experience, for perhaps the first time, an ability that is "beyond us." We find ourselves doing "more than we ever dreamed we could." "I didn't do it," we say. It was done by us to a certain extent. But it was also done through us. And that is when the whole area of superachieving opens up.

It is also the area where religion begins. And that is the second thesis of the book—namely, that in the critical experiences we all face, religion can happen. We can be "bound back" to who we are, which is what the word *religion* means at its root. We can be whole. Religion is for achievers, which is why so many business and labor and political and professional people in America are currently intrigued by religion. Prayer breakfasts abound across the country as eloquent testimony to the desire of achievers to become superachievers.

Precisely here is where this book is different from such books as Abraham Maslow's *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Wayne Dyer's *Your Erroneous Zones*, and Thomas Harris's *I'm OK—You're OK*. It says you can't become all those good things such

writers are talking about *on your own*. You can't be a "self-actualizing" person who is free from "erroneous zones" and "thinks positively" on your own. You can't do it alone under a tree. We go to the limits of our ability, as such writers rightly suggest. It is only then, as they do not suggest, that we realize that the only way to move from achieving to superachieving is for God to take over and do the achieving through us.

It is the Bible that acquaints us with the symbols and parables that throw us off good old Emersonian self-reliance and onto God. "It is the God-relationship," the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard wrote, "that makes a man a man." Or, that makes a person a person. And it is the church and synagogue that acquaint us with the Bible. That is their job.

Now to be sure, we are all well aware of instance after instance of these venerable institutions bungling their job. Institutional religion has focused on "social action" or "fellowship" or even "Bible study" and given us anything but the symbols and parables that will change our lives. What church and synagogue do on Friday and Saturday and Sunday has to be so arresting that it lasts the rest of the week.

This means that anything goes in church and synagogue to make the symbols and parables of our religion stick. Exciting worship, tears of joy and sorrow, laughter, prophetic witness, fellowship so intense we wouldn't want to be anywhere else. This is the way lives are changed. This is the way the sleeping giants which are our religious institutions are aroused. Not by changing ourselves, which is possible only up to a point. Indeed, many would argue that even that far is not possible. But by allowing *God* to change *us*, which is quite possible indeed. We call that process "grace."

*Grace* is the word Emerson, Maslow, and company leave out. They omit the very process which is *most* equipped to make people "self-actualizing," free from "erroneous zones," "OK." In my crisis, be it large or small, I realize that I cannot achieve all those things the self-helpers are talking about on my own. I have to have help. If I am ever going to move from achieving to superachieving, I have to *be* moved. I *cannot* move myself. It is the bootstrap fallacy of modern psychology to think that I can.

It is the classic religious confrontation between faith and works being played out in the guise of psychology. Modern psychologists are simply latter-day works theologians. They have taken the achievements, the works, on which our American culture is built and applied the same work ethic to the inner life. It can be done, up to a point. The trouble is that the point, which is partial, masquerades as the full circle, which is whole. I cannot make myself whole. I cannot achieve wholeness. I cannot "work" it out. Not on my own. I have to have help. "Work out your own salvation," Paul wrote. That's the 49 percent. "For *God* is at work in you" (Philippians 1:12-13). That's the 51 percent. As a matter of fact, in Paul's own case he felt it was 100 percent. "I worked harder than any of them," he explains, "though *it was not I*, but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). "Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Philippians 3:12).

I cannot bootstrap my own "peace of mind," my "positive thinking," my "possibility thinking." I cannot free myself from my myriad "erroneous zones." Not until I *give up* thinking that I can. I have to *lose* my life in order to find it (Mark 8:35). And I will only do that in a crisis, when I am confronted with the fact that, in spite of all the "self-help" books I have read, I am not making it. I just am not achieving. I am not being saved, made "whole," by my works. Only by my faith, which, in Luther's famous phrase, is my "response to God's grace." As Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well" (Luke 18:42), whole, not your works.

Most of us are quite capable of achieving. We can achieve much of what modern psychologists are telling us to do. And it is right, needed, and helpful that they tell us how to do it. The problem is that we can't do it all, and the self-help books strongly imply that we can. It is the cardinal sin of the bootstrappers, from Dyer to Emerson to Pelagius. I can change myself, if I am lucky and work hard, maybe even as much as that 49 percent. But the lesson I have to learn, if I am going to move from achieving to superachieving, is that, in the final analysis, *I* cannot change myself. I have to *be* changed. *God* is what does the changing. *God* is the 51 percent. Many would argue with Paul, that God is 100 percent. "God is the name that comes to me," wrote the poet Edwin Arlington Robinson, "when I think and feel how

little I have to do with what I am." God is the name that comes to me when I *find* myself changing, when I find myself becoming whole, happy, "OK," "actualized,"—by whatever metaphor, the Golden Fleece of all modern psychologies.

Otherwise it is simply the same old Pharisaism all over again. Do this, do that. Change this, change that. Achieve this, achieve that. Follow such and such a "strategy" for "rational living." Do this and you will have "peace of mind." Draw up a list of your worries and guilts and you will be free of your erroneous zones, "depressing little pockets of personality," laments the dust jacket, "that create unhappiness." More accurately, external needs that immobilize rather than internal wants which satisfy. "A means of using things outside yourself," Dyer says, "to explain how you feel."<sup>1</sup>

The reason such books—the self-help kind—sell so well is that they create the erroneous impression that we are in control of our own lives. That is precisely the impression the Pharisees were trying to create. They had 613 "strategies for rational living," and every one of them was nothing more nor less than an unwitting attempt to get them off God- and onto self-reliance. That is why Jesus came down on them so hard. They were doing the opposite of what they intended to do. Unwittingly again, our modern Pharisees are doing the same. They are creating the illusion that we can change our lives. That may be 49 percent true, but when it poses, even unwittingly, as 100 percent true, that is when we are in for some real trouble indeed.

Emerson did us a great disservice when he trumpeted the virtues of self-reliance in his famous essay without *at the same time* waxing equally eloquent about God-reliance. It fitted in perfectly with our frontier, can-do psychology. And it is fine, make no mistake, *as far as it goes*. But it does not go far enough. In a word, it does not work, as any victim of the Vietnam War or Watergate or the billion-dollar New York City blackout will tell you. Indeed it is most interesting that one of the major Watergate figures, Charles Colson, Nixon's so-called hatchet man, has been travelling the country to "testify" that his self-reliant way of doing things was wrong. It did not make him happy. It did not help him in his crisis. It did not make him whole. Only religion, he found, did that.

In the spirit of another of our philosophers, John Dewey, it is



time to be pragmatic and return to the religion on which our country was founded. (It is interesting that Emerson's turning to self-reliance coincided with his turning away from mainstream religion.) It is the thesis of this book that it is our religion, mediated by church and synagogue (and elsewhere), that "binds us back" to who we are. Not our psychologists, who get us only so far. Not our modern Pharisees. But our always modern prophets calling us to "Be ye therefore perfect," "whole," knowing full well that we can't be and thus throwing us off ourselves and onto God, off the 613 strategies for rational living and onto the one and only rule of the game—namely, to realize that *all* our vaunted systems for changing ourselves are simply colossal presumptions *if* they presume to suggest that we can change ourselves by will rather than be changed by grace.

## II

Therefore it is the thesis of this book that the recovery of the religious process is the number-one job before us in America. We are a long way from what the Pilgrims came for. They were superachievers. You don't flee your country and take that kind of voyage and go through that kind of winter unless you are. They came to practice their religion. We don't do that so much any more. The religious process is the process by which achievers are bound back to the lost parts of themselves. It is the process by which we achieve psychological wholeness. In America that means getting the head back in touch with the heart. It means taking the inner life seriously again. It means catching our being up to our doing.

Church and synagogue in America are loaded with achievers. It is a reflection of our culture. And that is fine, as far as it goes. The only trouble is that church and synagogue are more than temples to achieving. They are places where we get tools for wholeness. They are where the religious process takes place. This is not to say it does not take place elsewhere. It is only to say it had better take place in church and synagogue or they are not what they purport to be. Which, of course, is precisely the trouble with American religious institutions today. Plenty of things are happening in churches. (I can only speak for them.) But they are not always religious things. Achievers are not being bound back to who they are through symbol and parable.

Church and synagogue are the places where the symbols and

parables are kept. A symbol, coming from its roots, "throws" us "together" with something, such as the cross, which has the power to bind us back to who we are. A parable "throws" us "beside" something, such as the story of the Pharisee and the Publican, which also has the power to bind us back to who we are. The trouble is that churches often do just about everything but recount the parables and share the symbols. So the church, for the most part, no longer matters. It is tolerated by achievers as a social appendix.

It is also the thesis of this book that achievers are bound back to who they are through their opposites. When I am in touch with who I am not, then I am, paradoxically, often closest to who I am. It is the classic way of opposition, going all the way back to Ecclesiastes. "When a man is at his lowest," Luther said, "light comes." The classic model is Jesus. He "emptied himself" (Philippians 2:7), in Paul's phrase (*kenosis*). He became a slave. What he did voluntarily we do involuntarily. What he did actively we do passively. We *find* ourselves *being* emptied—in our "dark nights of the soul," in our suffering, in our temptations, in our dreams and prayers, in our crises, in the achieving we do that is clearly beyond *our* doing. Jesus was the kenotic man whose atonement in self-emptying enables achievers to be "at one" with themselves, "bound back" to their original wholeness, "born again."

It is at such moments of self-emptying that the religious process happens. There are other times, to be sure, but these are perhaps the critical ones. Satan is whatever is preventing the union of our opposites. God is whatever makes for wholeness. God is the force binding achievers back to the *rest* of who they are, thus making them superachievers. That is not all God is, but God is at least that. The word *salvation* comes from the root for "whole." We are saved by our opposites. We are "fulfilled." We are "realized." The way this is different from modern psychologies is that it is religiously "achieved." We "become who we are," we "become the self we were meant to be," we "realize" and "fulfill" ourselves by the symbols and parables of our religion. In this way, we *are* realized. We *are* fulfilled. We do not realize ourselves. We do not fulfill ourselves.

## III

It is the further thesis of this book that religion is recovered for achievers in the passive acts of the spirit—prayer, dreams, reading the Bible, being in touch with emotion, self-emptying, doing more than they ever dreamed would be possible. It is the passive that links this book with my prior books, *Church Growth Is Not the Point*, *The Sleeping Giant: Arousing Church Power in America*, and *Arousing the Sleeping Giant: How to Organize Your Church for Action*. The passive acts are things achievers would not normally do but which they *find* themselves doing. That discovery *is* God in their lives. Left to our own devices we wouldn't pray. We wouldn't read the Bible. We wouldn't record our dreams. We wouldn't be in touch with the lost parts of ourselves. That is the point. We are *not* left to our own devices. We are not left alone. God *is* what gets us to pray, read, dream. God is in the passive acts, which is where the real action is for achievers. God *is* the heart fusing with the head, the inner fusing with the outer.

Church and synagogue are where the inner and the outer fuse. And if that fusion is not happening there, then they are not yet churches and synagogues. They are where achievers find their being catching up to their doing, where they find themselves embracing their opposites, sharing their dreams, reading typical stories, praying. These are the reasons church and synagogue members, many of them outstanding achievers, *are* in the pews on Sunday morning and Friday night. They realize all too well that they cannot achieve happiness on their own.

The reason church and synagogue, on the other hand, have been losing ground in America is that they all too often give up being for doing. The church, for instance, models itself on the Chamber of Commerce or the graduate school or the political party—all fine models for doing but not so fine for being. What most achievers need in our culture is not more "things to do," but more chances to be. The church is a laboratory for basic and applied research in being. The doing springs from the being, as it should. Rather than the being coming from the doing, which happens all too rarely. We do what we are rather than we are what we do. That shift will help us in America. It is the job of

church and synagogue to see that the shift is made. Which means it is their job to see that the religious process happens, people are made whole, and achievers become superachievers at last.

**Footnote**

1. Wayne Dyer, *Your Erroneous Zones* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1976), p. 221.

# THE PASSIVE ACTS

## I

I HAVE ONLY BEEN ABLE to find one reason for an achiever to spend time on religion and thus become, possibly, a superachiever. It is the same answer that Samuel Gompers gave when he was asked what Labor's platform was. He replied with one word—"More." Superachievers get more of themselves by relating to God as well as to themselves, other people, and the world around them. They are just greedy enough to want to live the fullest possible life before they die. Life is too short, in other words, not to include religion; psychology too frail not to include theology.

I want to be whole. I want integrity. The word comes from the Latin for "wholeness." Life is too short to be partial, to be incomplete. Can you imagine dying and not having experienced all there is of you to experience?

The church's<sup>1</sup> job is to stimulate, irritate, and otherwise agitate people to wholeness. It has other jobs, to be sure, but every other job is secondary to the one big job of catalyzing wholeness. That is why the church has to be different. You have to get something at the church that you get nowhere else. Otherwise, why waste time with the church? If the church is not mediating wholeness, then the church is not doing its job. *Religion*, coming from the roots for "bind" and "back," binds achievers back to the rest of who they are, thus enabling them to become, hopefully, superachievers. It gives them "being" as well as "doing," the inner as well as the outer life, faith as well as works, being achieved through, which is where the real achieving is, as well as achieving by.

I join a church to get more of myself. We all live in the dimension of self; we call it psychology. We all live in the dimension of others; we call it sociology. We all live in the dimension of the world around us; we call it ecology. But we do not all live in the dimension of God; we call it theology, the so-called queen of the sciences. When I include the queen I get more of myself.

The church's job is to mediate wholeness. It is to make the fourth dimension irresistible. It is to make it so fascinating that we can't stay out of it. That is what was happening in the first church. People could not stay away. Now people stay away in droves. One reason is that the other three dimensions are simply re-presented on Sunday morning and elsewhere, and the fourth is not presented at all. The church is redundant.

Every achiever has a hunger to be whole, to be integrated, to lead a 4/4 life. The church are the people who share the hunger and together seek ways in which to alleviate it. You don't do your "self-actualizing" alone under a tree if you are a Christian. You do it with other Christians. They are your church. The church are the people who are *being* actualized and share the joy with each other of that good news. The church are the people who help each other be who they are.

It goes very far back. Long before Christ a word was used by his people to capture this idea of wholeness. The Hebrews could never speak of God without speaking about people in the same breath. And the word they had for "person" was the word *nephesh*, which meant a whole, a self that included God. The church is in business to give us the fullest possible experience of ourselves. The church is dedicated to giving each of us a *nephesh* by the process known as religion. Its job is to bind achievers back to the rest of who they are and thus turn them into superachievers. To be sure, plenty of people can be made whole, "saved," outside the church. The old bromide *extra ecclesiam nulla salus est* ("outside the church there is no salvation") is just that—old. All I am suggesting is that catalyzing wholeness is the job of the church, and that if it does not do its job it is not yet the church.

## II

Having said all that, the amazing thing is that the Christian

religion, through the church, comes at me loud and strong announcing, "Believe it or not, you are *already* whole. All you have to do is accept your wholeness." It is, of course, a stunning thought. Better yet, a feeling. And it is clearly one of the most fulfilling feelings in the history of the world. I *am* whole. I *am* one. I *am* a unit, a totality, a self, a life, a soul. Why? Because the fourth dimension has included *me*. I have not included the fourth dimension. I have *been* included. It is a staggering feeling. It is where I get the power to be "OK," "think positively," be free from my "erroneous zones," be "actualized."

It is the power of the passive, not of the active. The achiever lives a truncated life. It isn't me seeking God. It is God seeking me. "Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord" (Deuteronomy 33:29). It happened at the Red Sea. It happened in Jesus Christ. And it happened for me. I *was* made whole and I had *nothing* to do with it. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me . . . who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). He had never seen him. He was as much a bootstrapper as any modern Pharisee. He *was* made whole. And he had *nothing* to do with it. "It was *not* I but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). "I am *nothing*" (2 Corinthians 12:11).

"Let's talk about grace," a superachiever said at a church meeting. A *church* meeting. He was right on target. The church's job is to share with each other how wholeness is integrating their lives. Do you know the first church's word for Christians? They called themselves "slaves," the passive ones, the ones who had been made whole and then went out with the announcement of their astonishing integrity. Talk about superachieving, once they had been made whole, once they had been put in touch with their being, they "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

I can't change myself; I am changed. I can't save myself; I am saved. It is a psychology of the passive, not active. All done by "slaves," a word which is the *opposite* of achieving to make the point that the achieving was done through them, not by them, and that *that* was how you became a superachiever, when *you* had nothing to do with it, but were a slave, with zero control over your own life. I am saved. I am made whole. I am healed. It is

what the word *save* meant. It meant "to heal" or "make whole." The congregation is a healing community. "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). The congregation knows they cannot achieve wholeness alone. The church are the people who help each other become who they are.

It wasn't a philosophy. It wasn't an ethic. It wasn't a technique. The gospel was an announcement. You are saved. You are forgiven. You are healed. "It is the power of God for salvation," a stunned early Christian wrote (Romans 1:16). And all you have to do is respond to the grace that is working in you—not the grace on which you are working. Not the life you are trying to change and getting, at best, only 49 percent of the way. That is *all* you have to do. And you don't even *have* to do that. It is up to you. Religion is response, and we are free to respond or not.

### III

But the extraordinary thing is that we *find* ourselves responding. It may not be loud and clear, it may only be .01 on a religious scale of 1—10, but we are responding. That is why we form churches. The church are the responding ones, no matter how equivocal, no matter how timorous. We come in response to news. We choose in response to choice. We believe in response to grace.

And in that response is more achievement than achievers have ever known. "Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2:43). Talk about superachieving! Talk about works! It was beyond belief, but it was not beyond behavior. Things were happening. There is no limit to what can be done through responding people. There is no limit to the salvation that *is* being done through them. There is no limit to the wholeness that is integrating every area of their lives and every area of their life together. A man lame from birth begged from Peter and John:

But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up. . . . And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God (Acts 3:1-7).

There is no limit to the signs and wonders that can be done



through achievers whom the salvation is healing, who are being made whole, who are more.

But it can only happen through crisis. I have to be brought up short and realize I cannot work out my salvation alone. More can only come from less.

**Footnote**

1. Clearly this is the synagogue's job as well. But to avoid being presumptuous, I have limited my discussion to the church.

# 2

## THE NEGATIVE AFFIRMS

A NEW WORD has come into my vocabulary, and it has brought with it a crisis. Not a major crisis to be sure, but an insistent one. It is a word achievers never use. It is a word I cannot remember ever having used, at least not as it applies to me. And it is a word I have a great deal of fear of using. But as I was reflecting on where I am in my partial life, somehow I was moved to this word. Somehow the word moved itself to me. Use of this word can move you from achieving to superachieving. It is your first crisis on your way to change.

There are some interesting things about this word. One is that, as usual, it is not something I came up with. Someone thrust a little paperback book in my hand, and that was it.<sup>1</sup> Without someone bringing the word to me, in other words, I doubt that I would ever have come up with it. It just is not in my frame of reference. Just as I use the word *deoxyribonucleic* rarely, so I use this word, if at all, even more rarely than that.

A second thing to be said about the word is that I don't really want to use it. It makes me uncomfortable. It sits in my mouth like one of those cotton bales at the dentist's.

A third thing to be said about the word is that I have the feeling, rightly or wrongly, that all my life I have been educated in staying as far from it as possible. That is why I can honestly say I cannot remember ever having used the word, in writing or speaking, in dreaming or soliloquy. This word and I have kept a respectful distance. I am certain it was not intentional, but

from the very first, my parents, my family, my teachers, my friends were all, each in his or her way, doing their best to keep me separated from this word. Indeed my whole life has been an education in learning the word's opposite. It is not a word for achievers.

Fourth, I am glad I learned this word now. Whether I use it or not is another matter. But at least I have learned it half-way through my life. And by learned, I do not mean that it is a word you have to go to college to learn. It's a word you could know and understand and use before you are in first grade. But that, of course, is when your education begins in learning the word's opposite. And I don't blame anybody, mind you. Because I'm sure it's quite possible that those same parents, family, teachers, friends used the word in my presence. They may even have applied it to me. They may even have racked their brains for ways they could get me to hear the word. But their trumpets were never as effective as Joshua's. And my walls of deafness never came tumbling down. I never heard the word.

Fifth, I had so little to do with the word that if that same book had been thrust in my hands at some other time in my life, I might never have seen the word. It would have been there, of course, but I might not have seen it. The giving of the book, an act of which I was the recipient, was just the tip of the iceberg. The bottom 6/7 were the various crises that had happened to me during the previous weeks and months and years and life-time to bring me to the point where, even though I have read and heard that word since I was a child, for the first time I saw it, for the first time I heard it. And all you can say about such things is that it was the Lord's timing. We don't know. God is what explains us to ourselves at various times in our lives. As a superachiever said to me once, "Bob, my friends ask me why I go to church. And I tell them, 'To get to know myself.' " He was so right.

Sixth, it is a word that epitomizes the Christian faith. Of course, there are plenty of other words for which you could make the same claim. But they have become tired. It is hard to hear them anymore. We use the word *love*, for instance, so many times during the service of worship in Christian churches that it becomes, or can easily become, a cliché. There is an element of

newness in this word, even though it is as old as the word *love*. It is just not as used. So when you say it is a word which sums up the Christian faith for superachievers, you're saying, "Sure, it's a word which has been around for a long time, but it's fresh." And one of the reasons it's fresh is that, at first blush, it's negative. You do a double take when you hear this word. "How could that word epitomize my faith?" you ask. And you rebel a little. It makes you uncomfortable. That's why I'm afraid to use it. Who would want what appears to be a negative word to summarize his or her faith? Particularly if you are an achiever and have been raised on the elixirs of "positive thinking" and "possibility thinking."

Seventh, it isn't therefore everybody's word. And that's fine. If there are words that get you farther than this one, good. Go with them. The main thing is to come up with the word that puts it all together for you and thrusts you into bold new dimensions of personal growth. That is what this word did for me. It didn't leap from the pages. There was nothing dramatic. There was only the quiet insistence as the word kept obtruding itself on my consciousness. And when a word begins to do that, watch out, because you are in the grip of a powerful word in your life. And, of course, it need not be a "religious" word. There are words that move us that have nothing to do with religion. But when you get a word that moves you *and* moves you in the area of your religion, then you are in the grip of a powerful word indeed.

Eighth, it's all brought home in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). The word is never used, but it is a summary word in the story. When the young man realized that he was living out this word in his life, that is when he started his spiritual growth. He had to go a long way, he had to do many things before the timing was right for the word to be heard. But when it was heard, when all the events of his life came together to make the timing for the hearing right, when he was living it out, not just reading it or hearing it or saying it, but actually living it, that is when his life began to change.

Last, it is also brought home in the stories we write as superachievers. Without this word, religion is just another ritual. When you stop to think about it, the whole religious experience

for superachievers depends for its effect on our saying this one word, a word we rarely use, a word that bothers us, a word we would not likely have the courage to use with our friends, a word we may never have used in our lifetime and certainly did not use as applying to us, a word so on the edge of being negative that we avoid it at every opportunity. And yet a word so full of affirmation that when it comes to us, because we would never come to it, we are arrested with the summary nature of it as it spells out our relationship to God. A word that says to us as it said to the Prodigal Son, this word is you. It is the word *helpless*. Superachievers are people who use that word a lot.

Footnote

1. O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959).

# 3

## THE STRANGER BEFRIENDS

I SUPPOSE I identify with the man who got mugged. I've tried to identify with the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), but I just can't pull it off. The number of times I am a Good Samaritan is few. I've tried to think back to all my Good Samaritan acts, and I just can't come up with many.

The priest, of course, is an easy one. I can readily identify with him. I'm passing by all the time. There are all these chances to go out of my way to help someone, and every day I come home with another opportunity missed. There is no time for that when you're out achieving. It is the same with the assistant priest, the Levite. I play it just as safe as he did and rarely pick anyone up by the side of the road.

But the man who got mugged, the helpless one, is a different matter. I guess I wouldn't normally identify with him, and maybe that is why he has been growing on me. It's a curious thing about these old stories. We've known them all our lives, and maybe that is why, when we come to them yet another time, they are not always compelling. But if we read them over and let them work on us, strange things can happen.

### I

For one thing, the man who got mugged had done a foolish thing, and, if I will be honest, I'm doing foolish things all the time. He was walking alone on the roughest stretch of road around. He was asking for it from the bandits. Maybe that's

where we get the phrase "thick as thieves," because they were everywhere on the Jericho Road. It was an ideal place to get robbed. Sure, the religious professionals and the Samaritan were apparently alone too, but either they enjoyed professional immunity, or, in the case of the Samaritan, had taken appropriate precautions, such as walking at a different time of day. At any rate, the man who got mugged had clearly made a mistake and had no one to blame but himself.

Religion is rescue. That is not all religion is, but religion is at least that. Religion doesn't begin until we end. If achievers can handle everything on their own, then they are hardly candidates for religion. I don't suppose religion ever really takes over in our lives until we have failed at something so badly that we are helpless by the side of the road. The church are the helpless ones, the ones who can no longer "do." The job for achievers, if they want to be whole, is to confess their helplessness in churches. Churches are full of people who know they cannot bootstrap their own wholeness.

In order to be rescued, we have to be helpless. And in order to be helpless, something has to happen to us that demonstrates clearly that we are not in control. We have to fail in clearing up our "erroneous zones," as inevitably we will. We have to fail in "actualizing ourselves," as we will. It is erroneous to pretend we can succeed. We have to fail in our job. Or with our family. Or with our health. It has to be demonstrated to us that we are not "the greatest." That we are not on top. That we are helpless by the side of the road. The church are the people who admit that.

## II

There were three opportunities to rescue the man by the side of the road. The first two passed by. They were his friends, potentially at least. They were his fellow countrymen. And they symbolized rescue. They were religious professionals. They were, presumably, the church.

There is a part of me that says, You jerk, you blew it. You don't deserve to be rescued. You have no one to blame but yourself. You need to be punished. I will punish you with guilt. I will leave you by the side of the road. There is no rescue here.

The parts of me I am closest to are the parts that sometimes pass me by. Who is my neighbor within? The priest, the part of me that I thought was mediating God, passes me by. What am I to think? What am I to feel? The place where I expected help refuses help. In other words, the part of me that I am most comfortable with can, in times of crisis, bring me the least help.

The priest part of me is the part that says I am going to be saved by law. The law said you don't touch a dead person, which the man by the side of the road might have been, or you will be unclean for seven days. The law, in other words, beats the spirit. It is an old dichotomy. And it plays itself out in superachievers every day. They are quite familiar with this part of themselves. It is the opposite of Bonhoeffer's dictum, "We must allow ourselves to be interrupted by God." The law is the part of me which says it is exactly the interruption that is so dangerous. That is what you have to watch out for. If you are interrupted, you cannot keep your eye on salvation. Because the interruption does not fit in with your plan. You get wholeness according to plan, the law says. Not according to surprise. The last thing I want, the priest part of me says, is to be surprised. I plan my business, and I plan my psychology. That is how I achieve. It may be, but it is not how I superachieve.

Or take the assistant priest. I am close to him. I expect help from him when I am helpless. Surely there is rescue here. But the assistant priest plays it safe. He is the part of me that will not risk. After all, he is on his way up in the world. The last thing he wants to do is jeopardize his chance of success. He is younger and you would think he would risk. But the executive has put down the gambler in me. The executive wants his plan tight and the young man on his way up wants his way safe. After all, a person by the side of the Jericho Road was often a decoy. If you went over to help you could be jumped by thieves.

It's a tough thing to get at, but what is being stolen here is our original relationship to our environment. Achievers are being robbed constantly of a direct relationship to those around them because of their avoidance of surprise and risk. Name one church, full as many of them are of achievers, in which you were surprised, in which you risked anything. Even more tragic, we are being robbed of a direct relationship to ourselves. The old accepted



and respected values of planning and eliminating risk have usurped our ability in churches and elsewhere to respond to other people who need us, let alone respond to our own helplessness. Apparently we have to look elsewhere for rescue, or, to use the religious word, salvation.

### III

What Jesus did was to reveal the salvation, the wholeness, in unusual places. That is what is surprising about reading the New Testament. It is what "mobilizes" us to change, to use Dyer's word from *Your Erroneous Zones*. You go beneath the accepted and respected values that you think will work when you are helpless, find that often they do not work, and end up with new values that work even better, that help you in your helplessness. This does not mean that you throw out all the old values. What it does mean is that there will be times when you are helpless that such values are not valuable. They do not come to your aid. Not nearly so well as a value from an unexpected place.

The Samaritan was from a different country. He was a foreigner. He was despised. The Jews hated the Samaritans. They were racially impure and religious heretics. Which is to say they were non-Jews and believed differently. The man by the side of the road was not comfortable with the Samaritan. And yet, and here is the surprise and the risk, help came to the helpless from a quarter where he least expected it. He was saved by his opposite. The church is the one institution which thrives on putting opposites together. Go to a church meeting and—in the lively churches—you will see old, young, rich, poor, black, white, achieving, non-achieving.

You've got to go down the long road into yourself to get hold of this value because it is so hard to believe it could be there. The Jericho Road dropped 3600 feet in twenty miles, and that is about as deeply into ourselves as we have to go to get hold of this value. The brilliance of Jesus was that, with a simple parable, he could "throw" us this close to ourselves. He could help us be this much "together."

What this value is telling me is that I am often saved by the very thing from which I feel most estranged. That is the way I achieve. It is the way I change, the way I become OK. The first

Christians were called followers of "the Way" (Acts 22:4). The side of myself that I like least is often the side that likes me most. It is anything but "erroneous." It is the truth that sets me free (John 8:32). I should do anything *but* try to eliminate my "erroneous zone." When you are shipwrecked, if you fight the waves you will drown; if you go with them, you will be washed ashore. The seagull weathers the storm by facing into the gale. Conversely, that side of me with which I feel most comfortable is often that side which, in the crisis of my helplessness, is the side which lets me down, which passes me by on the other side. We don't know why this is. We can't explain it. But it is there, and it is one of the great paradoxes of the way to wholeness. The church's job is to confront achievers with that paradox.

Jesus was despised. He was their opposite. He confounded their expectations. And yet he saved them. He saves us. It is hard to believe. And, in a sense, we don't have to believe it. All we have to do is take the long Jericho Road down into ourselves and feel it. All we have to do is be sensitive to the fact that, as we come in touch with that part of ourselves from which we feel most estranged, as it comes in touch with us, it is at that moment that Jesus is coming into our lives. It is at that moment that we are saved, at least for the moment. It is at that moment that we are whole. It is a new form of the classic *via negativa* of religion, or so-called negative way to wholeness.

Our Samaritan picks us up by the side of the road when we are helpless. He does not leave us alone. He cares for us. He heals us, the way our wives or our husbands do. So often we marry, as we say, our opposite. We value in the other what we have the most trouble valuing in ourselves. The religious process for achievers is to be married by their opposite within. In this way we are "bound back" to who we are. We are whole.

What religion does, is give achievers back to themselves. It is a gift, a grace. And when we are Christians, we are given the gift of ourselves by that which is least ourselves through an experience of helplessness, a crucifixion. That is the Lord coming into our lives. It is the stranger. And he comes, the story says, bringing us new life, resurrection. The church are the people who enable each other's crucifixion.

For instance, and there is some risk in this, the side of achievers, including myself, from which they feel most estranged is

their feeling side. In spite of Michael Maccoby's book, *The Gamesman*, on catching feeling up to thinking most achievers are still so "performance-oriented," so "goal-oriented," so planned, if you will, so safe, that it is hard for them to be spontaneous, to have an original relationship to their environment, to be surprised, to take risks. Which means, of course, that, paradoxically, the most growth-filled moments for me as an achiever on my Jericho Road, the saving graces for me as I journey downward into myself, are those moments when my feelings get in touch with me and I find myself, to my surprise, and to my risk, being saved by that very part of myself from which I feel most estranged, the part which, at first blush, I feel is most "erroneous."

How can you tell? You can tell by how you feel. You feel the "love, joy, peace" Paul was talking about (Galatians 5:22). He said it to a church. And how do you feel that? You know. It is in a moment. It is in eyes. It is often in tears. It is in smiles. You can see all this in churches. And if you don't see it, then it isn't the church. And it isn't you, of course. It is this stranger inside you, this Samaritan, who finds you helpless by the side of the road of your life because of some folly, some foolishness, some nonsense for which you have only yourself to blame. And who finds you *after* the parts of yourself to which you would normally turn have, paradoxically, passed you by.

This is the psychological process—that the parts to which achievers normally turn are not sufficient. It is only then that we learn the truth of the word that came to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Because if we had been sufficient for ourselves, where would the religion be in that? Where would the change be? In spite of all the self-help books, we are not OK. We are not self-actualizing. We are not free of erroneous zones. The psychological process is to find we are not sufficient and then to find ourselves on our journey down delivered by the hands of our opposite, the one from whom we felt estranged, the Christ, the stranger within. In our helplessness, it is he who picks us up. It is he who rescues. It is he who brings us salvation. It is he who makes us whole. "While we were yet helpless . . . Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6,8). The church, full of helpless achievers, are the people who celebrate that.

# 4

## THE SOWER REAPS

SOMETIMES I COME TO THE BIBLE and it just doesn't take. I don't know what it is, but it just isn't there. Maybe it's the words. Maybe it's the lack of notes. I never seem to know where I am. Maybe it's just me.

Sometimes I come to the Bible and I'm so busy I can't take much time. I want to take more, but there are other priorities in my life, and there never seems to be enough time for the Bible.

Sometimes I do not come to the Bible at all. It is ponderous. The type is small, the language arcane. Who needs it? Anywhere I dip in I am lost. I am behind from the beginning. You have to be a doctor of theology to understand it.

The story of my life as an achiever trying to become a super-achiever is the story of the attraction and repulsion of the Bible. I try to explain away my need for it. But it's no good. You can take away the singing and the silence and the prayers. But the one thing you cannot take away is the symbols and parables of the Bible which "throw" me "with" and "beside" my self. My life as one who wants wholeness is my life in relation to it.

### I

Take that first blush of enthusiasm. I come to the Bible ready to listen. I read a passage and, as we say, get all fired up. I leave the Bible ready to act on what I have read. And then, within an hour, it is gone. I have become so caught up in my daily routine that my enthusiasm has vanished. Only recently, for instance, I carried around the Parable of the Sower in my coat pocket (Matthew 13:1-9). I'd pull it out every now and then and pore

over it. I even left room at the bottom for notes. And I took some. I got all fired up. And then it was gone. It evaporated into my routine.

It is this inability to stick that bothers me most about the Bible. I know there's good stuff in it. I know it's moved people and nations. But often it doesn't move me. It doesn't stick with me. And so I don't stick with it. I tuck the passage back into my pocket and hurry on to my next meeting.

What is there in me as an achiever that makes me like the Capernaum subsoil, which, in many places, had a thin layer of rock just under the surface? The seed when it fell would start to grow, all right, but within days it would be all over, because there was no way the roots could go down. Sure, I can put it all on the Bible and say it's chaotic in form and esoteric in content. But the burden of proof is on me, not on the Bible, if only for the reason that it has been around 2,000 years and will be around for another 2,000. What is there in me that my roots are so shallow?

I am impatient. Everyone has a different way of describing his or her layer of rock, but for me it is simple. When the Word of God does not take, I tuck it back into my pocket and go on to my next duty. I do not give the seed time to generate. "Fair seed-time had my soul," said Walt Whitman. Little seed-time has mine.

## II

Take all those other priorities in my life. The Bible gets crowded out. Achievers are into everything if they are generalists and into one thing double full-time if they are specialists. It's like the thorns in the field. They choke the grain as they compete for the sun. And they are good priorities. Job and home and community and church. Everything seems to be No. 1. And they are crowding out the Bible. I choose to let them crowd out the Bible. Why?

Because it is easier. Everyone can come up with his or her own answer, but in my case it is because the other priorities are easier. It is good to read the newspaper, but it is also good to read the Bible. It's not a matter of giving up the one for the other. It's a matter of doing both. But what happens to me is that, day after

day, I read the one and not the other. And the only explanation I have been able to come up with is that it's easier. I only read what was "good" for me to read in college. But college is long gone, and there is no threat of a grade hanging over me now. So why bother with the tough stuff? It gets crowded out.

### III

Take the long periods when I do not come to the Bible at all. There were paths in the fields in Palestine, and they had been beaten down hard with years of feet. Whenever the seed fell on the path, it had no chance. The path was hard and would never be plowed. Or if it was plowed, it would be plowed too late because the birds would have gotten the seed by then.

Each of us has a reason for why we are hard and why the Word of God bounces rather than roots. In my case, again it is simple. I need no agony of introversion to find out why the Bible doesn't take. I do not come to the Bible because I am defensive. I do not want the Bible to get hold of me. I am afraid. I know what it can do, and I do not want to yield control of my life. I do not want to be helpless. The essence of my selfhood is to be in control. To be "the master of my fate and captain of my soul." To "plan my life and live my plan." The last thing I want is to be planned, to be controlled. Because that means going from active to passive living, where I am no longer the driver but the driven. When my wife and I get in the car together, guess who always does the driving.

### IV

I was with a superachiever from a church not long ago, and he could not contain himself for all the things that were happening in his life because of the Bible. For two hours he talked nonstop. He even found himself in airplanes from Connecticut to Texas because of the Bible. He sent me a letter from Austin, he was so excited. I saw the postmark and said to myself, "Who on earth do I know in Austin, Texas?" He could not contain his excitement. And there I was sitting with him, and this image kept coming back to me of seeds falling on good soil, yielding to plow and to sun and to rain.

Why was my friend yielding? I thought about him as he shared

himself with me. Why was the seed falling on such good soil? For one thing, my friend has been helpless. A spectacular achiever by the world's standards, he has been plowed up pretty badly. "I wasn't much into religion," he said, "but I was very much into desperation." And he was sharing that. But what impressed me is that he could have taken the route of the path and beaten that soil back down and packed it hard and drawn into his carapace. Instead, he chose to let the plowed-up soil of his wounded life remain open to the seed of God's word. He was honest about his helplessness and the limits of his six-figure achieving.

Why? Why did he make that choice? When he could have chosen to become defensive, busy, impatient. I don't know why he chose to remain open. And I am sure he would probably say that he hadn't. That it was chosen for him. That he had no control in the matter. And that would be the kind of passive response that drives achievers crazy, but on which superachievers thrive. But I also know that he is in a small group which is yielding itself to the Bible. And I know that he is helped in his response because it is shared by the one who shares his life. She too has been helpless. She too is open. And when the way for him is rocky, thorny, hard, she is there. And when the way for her is rocky, thorny, hard, he is there. And it is a beautiful thing to watch the Word work its way in them and bring forth grain, "some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:8).

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It caused me to reflect, this experience with my superachiever friend. And what I came up with was a great mystery. I wouldn't have been there listening to him if it hadn't been for the Word. I wouldn't even have known him. I wouldn't even be living in his community. And it cast me back all the way to seminary and how at one point I had been ready to leave. It was toward the end of my first year, and I had just been accepted at Harvard in the doctoral program in English, and I was getting ready to go.

And then I went in to the president and talked it over with him, and I went to my professor of Old Testament and talked it over with him. And then another professor. And then I talked it over with myself. And as I got honest something kept coming to me,

not in any dramatic way but in an insistent one. You are not finished with the Bible, the word came to me. It is not finished with you. You are not finished with the questions about God. And, for you, they are more important than the questions of metaphor in Swift's "Batrachomyomachia." Because, for you, you cannot ask the question about wholeness without asking the question about God. So do not leave the seminary, "the seed place," which is what the word *seminary* means at its root. The Word was having a lot more to do with my life than I would give it credit for. And so was the church, the keeper of the Word.

\*

Not long ago I was in a room in another seminary, a place where churches begin, and I was responsible for, of all things, catalyzing wholeness for the people who were there. And I do not know to this day exactly what happened or why. It was organic. The seed time was good. But there we all were and I was suggesting we go to our Bibles and listen and see what might happen, as James Muilenburg, my Old Testament professor, had suggested to me. Why don't we, I said, each go away into an hour of silence, and take our Bibles with us and read Isaiah 53, the passage about the Suffering Servant, and read it in a special way. Why don't we read it slowly, a word or a phrase at a time. And as we read it, why don't we feel our way into it, going down with it as it works its way into us, because the Word has the power to do that. And then, why don't we have a pad beside us so we can jot down whatever comes to us. And by whatever, I meant literally whatever. Any word or image or phrase or sentence. You may think of your Aunt Matilda. Fine. Put her down. You may think of Jesus. Fine. Put him down. Whatever comes to you, jot it down.

And then linger with it. Let it work on you. The Word will do that. It has that power. For the ancient Hebrew it was a living thing, the *dabar Yahweh*. Go down, just above sleep, jotting whatever comes to you as you go. And then gradually come back up. Remember, you have an hour, plenty of time to take plenty of time. Fair seed time has your soul. And then write in a sentence at the end what has come to you, what the Word has called you to do. Because in the Hebrew the word for *hear* meant to "obey."



We can only hear the Word when we do it. Only when we are on that plane to Austin because of the Word is the Word being heard.

In an hour the people in the seminary came back. The atmosphere was charged. From our lightheartedness before we went, we had changed to a surprising depth. Not that you cannot be deep when you are light, but we all knew we were on the edge of something profoundly mysterious that had happened to us. One even used the word *mystical*. Another shared a letter he had received from home. He choked up as he read. But it was not the choking of thorns. He was at his first priority now, and he was giving it time. He passed the letter to the person next to him to read it for him. Afterwards someone came up to him and said to him, the achiever who had always been impatient with the agenda and the learning, "for the first time I loved you."

Then someone else said, "I can hardly believe this, but this is what came to me as I read." And then he shared a vision which had occurred to him as he read Isaiah 53. He had written it down, about a page, about him and his life and a mountain. And then at the end was a poem in rhyme which had come to him in that hour. The man next to him could not contain himself and said, "Praise the Lord!" It was the same man whose son had been knifed to death in a race fight only a year before. And I found myself saying, "Yes, praise the Lord." And we all stood and held hands in a big circle and each in his or her own way praised the Lord in spontaneous prayer. And then, because the experience of the good soil in the seminary had been so seminal, we left the room in silence.

What these experiences said to me was this. The Word has been at work in my life all this time. My soil, in spite of my overemphasis on achieving, is good soil. It is not nearly so rocky, thorny, hard as I like to think. Now, for the sake of the Word, consider doing these things. Let your helplessness be vulnerable to the Word. Do not pack your helplessness down. Do not layer it over or crowd it out. Share it with your church. Share it with the one whom you love. Open yourself to the Word, somewhere, sometime, an hour, relaxed, waiting, each week. And the Word will bring forth in you, as surely as the sun follows the rain, grain, a hundredfold.

# 5

## THE PAUPER ENRICHES

THERE IS A PART OF ME I don't like, even though I know it's necessary for my wholeness. It is the part I'm always putting down. It is the part I like to forget. It is weak, and achievers can't stand weakness. It is helpless. It is powerless. It is like the man in the story Jesus told who was so weak he could not ward off the dogs that came to lick his sores (Luke 16:19-31).

I, on the other hand, like to think of myself as powerful, helpful, strong. There is a part of me I like very much. It is the part that is in control, that is on top, self-reliant, confident. It is like the man in the story Jesus told who made a great deal of money and ate like a gourmet every day and had no time for the helpless man who lay at his gate hoping to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table.

The word *parable*, as we remember, comes from the root for "throw." A symbol "throws together" and a parable "throws beside." The throw indicates the energy necessary to make the symbol or parable stick with achievers. "The good news of the kingdom of God is preached," Jesus said, "and everyone enters it violently" (Luke 16:16). He said it just before the parable of the rich man and the poor man.

When that story is thrown down beside me I find myself responding to what it says at two levels. That, of course, is the genius of parables. We respond at many levels. The first level is the more obvious. The rich neglect the poor at their peril. It is at this level that we are all quite familiar with the story of Lazarus and the rich

man, or, as he came to be known later, *Dives*, from the Latin for "rich." The achiever ended up in hell because he had neglected the underachiever on earth. It is a tough story with a tough moral and it takes tough people to carry it around beside them. The rich man merely accepted Lazarus as part of the landscape.<sup>1</sup> He saw the suffering but didn't feel it. He did nothing about it. In the image of the Good Samaritan parable, he "passed by on the other side." Therefore, his reward would be hell.

## I

But there is another kind of hell. It is the hell not of disregarding the poor "out there" but the poor "in here." It is the hell of disregarding the underachiever part in me. The part of me that, as an achiever, I don't like. It is weak, helpless, powerless, and I want to be powerful, helpful, strong. The church are the people who share their helplessness. It takes a lot of courage for achievers to be in churches, to admit they cannot achieve wholeness alone under a tree.

Hell is not listening to the part of me that is clamoring for attention but that I can put off at the gate of my consciousness because it is weak and my ego is strong. Hell is the division in me between powerful and powerless and not wanting to admit the powerless through the gate of my consciousness. Hell is amassing riches, power, fame in my outer life and being a pauper in my inner life. Hell is accepting the weak me at the gate of my consciousness as part of the landscape of my psyche, the landscape of my soul—they are the same Greek word—and never letting it through the gate, giving it, if at all, no more than crumbs from the table of my life.

Why is this hell? Because in Jesus' story he talks about "a great chasm" (Luke 16:26) that had opened up between the rich man and Lazarus. They were only a handbreadth apart according to Jewish tradition,<sup>2</sup> and yet the distance was infinite. The rich man pleads with Father Abraham in heaven—in one of the dramatic reversals Jesus was so fond of—to "send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame" (Luke 16:24). But Lazarus will not come. It is too late. The rich man denied his pauper within too long. And now he is in hell.

Achievers are in hell when they deny their pauper within because it will not be denied. It is constantly breaking through consciousness. The weak part is too strong for that. It refuses to sit beneath us but is thrown in the dead of the night and during the day beside us. The pauper is too rich to be divested. The weak is too strong. The helpless too helpful. It is the very part we most reject in ourselves that is our most religious part, that is binding us back to who we are. It is the Christ, the helpless one, within us. "The stone which the builders rejected," the psalmist wrote, "has become the chief cornerstone" (Psalm 8:22). "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). Accepting the pauper within is what we mean by "accepting Christ." It is what church members do. It is what superachievers do because they want to lead whole lives.

## II

What is the part of you, as an achiever, that you are always putting down as "erroneous"? It is your Savior. Your religion is working itself out in your psyche, your soul, your blood. What is the part of you that you cannot stand because it is weak, powerless, helpless? The incarnation was a baby. What could be more helpless? It was a crucifixion outside the gates. What could be more helpless?

Is it any accident that Lazarus is the only person Jesus names in any of his parables? His name meant "God is my help." When we admit our helplessness, that is when we are most available to God. The church are the people who do that. Church is risky for achievers. And what is God but the name that comes to us when we admit we are helpless? God is the fusion of the helpless with the helpful in us, the weak with the strong, the powerless with the powerful. When I am "at one" with the parts of myself that I like the least, that *is* God. It is the atonement, the at-one-ment. It is what we call "religious" experience. It is *how* we are changed, since we *cannot* change ourselves. It is how we become psychologically whole.

The religious process is happening *all* the time. We are constantly being "bound back" to who we are. It is happening every day. "Those who have ears to hear. Those who have eyes to see." That *is* revelation in your life. When I am united with my pauper

within, from whom I am normally split, that *is* revelation. That *is* salvation. Our word *salvation* and the Hebrew word for "peace" both come from roots for "whole." "Be ye therefore perfect," Jesus said (Matthew 5:48). It meant, "Be ye therefore whole," coming from the root for "achievement," "completion," "wholeness." Be "undivided." Because wholeness is where the "love, joy, and peace" of the gospel are. When your pauper self sits down beside your princely self, when you are, as we say, "together," that is when you can love, because you love yourself. "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 19:19). You are spontaneous at last. You are, for the moment at least, at peace.

### III

How? How is the pauper united with the prince? How is the poor man thrown beside the rich? How is the superachiever "at one" with the underachiever? "Son, remember" (Luke 16:25), says the parable. The church is the keeper of memories. Remember first the good things. Do not get so hung up on remembering the negative that you forget the positive. And do not get so hooked on accepting the positive as your due that you forget it was "received." He was given life. He was given health. He was given brains. He was given heart. The word for "grace" in the Greek is the same as the word for "gift." Achiever, remember the gracious things that have been given to you in your life as you eat your gourmet meal.

The rich man remembered too late, of course, and that is the tragedy of it. Remembrance is the antidote, or at least one antidote, to keeping the poor man at the gate. As I remember what I have been given, I am enabled to accept the weak part of me that I do not normally accept, the "erroneous" part I reject. It is a mysterious alchemy. But it happens.

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Second, remember the scripture. Remember "Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29). Remember how your story is interwoven with their story. The Bible is simply story after story of how the pauper came to sit beside the prince. Of how people's unconscious merged with their conscious. Of how the part they liked least in themselves merged with the part they liked most. Look at Moses.

How he said he was not the one to go, but he went (Exodus 3). He turned a chain gang into a nation. Talk about superachieving! That *was* God in Moses' life. God was the fusion, at the burning bush, between who Moses was and who he felt he was not. God was that moment of wholeness.

Look at Paul, a classic achiever. He was going all the way as a Pharisee. He "persecuted the way to the death," as he himself tells it (Acts 22:4). You can't get much more unaccepting of the stranger at your gate than that. What he had done is what all of us do. He had projected his anger at himself onto others for not being at one with himself, for not knowing the love, joy, and peace, for not being whole, for not accepting the inferior part of himself that he despised. Plenty of achievers come home at night and take it out on their children.

We might want to argue that the Bible is not capable of this kind of fusion. But, as we saw in the last chapter, the Bible is capable of quite a lot. And the message of Jesus' story is precise. The rich man cannot believe that "Moses and the prophets" are enough to save people from the fate that has befallen him. He begs Abraham to send Lazarus back to his five brothers to warn them before it is too late. But Abraham refuses. "They have Moses and the prophets," he says. "Let them hear them." The rich man remonstrates. But it is to no avail. "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets," Jesus has Abraham say, "neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

This is hard for us to take. Jesus is saying that it is all there, in the Bible. That the achiever does not need a sign because all the signposts are there. And that if I am not convinced by what I read, by the way their story is my story, then I will not be convinced by anything else. Indeed, the Pharisees themselves, to whom Jesus was speaking, were not convinced.

It is all in the Bible. That is a powerful statement from the despised one. It goes back to the "throwing together" and "throwing beside." When the superachiever is thrown together with the symbols in the Bible, and when he or she is thrown beside the parables, in that fusion their story becomes his or her history. The Bible, as we say, is in our blood. It has *been* there *all along*. The job of churches is not to "get people into the Bible" but to get the Bible out of people. Jesus is saying that the Bible gives us *all we*

*need* for the prince in us to sit beside the pauper, for the super-achiever to be at the side of the underachiever, the helpful at the side of the helpless. Remember what is going on in the Bible. Because that is what is going on in you. And *that* is what changes you. *That* is what makes you whole.

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Remembering will also move us to a final step on our journey back to wholeness. It is the step of repentance. "If someone goes to them from the dead," the rich man said, "they will repent" (Luke 16:30). It was the rich man's last hope, and it was too late. They had their Bibles. He had his Bible. And he had not repented. This is tough stuff for achievers. Life has been good and they are not about to repent. That is why repentance is often heard in poor churches, not so often in rich.

It came from the Greek for "think." And that should appeal to achievers. They like to think. They like to develop strategies for "rational" living. And so, as might be expected, it is virtually always the feeling side which is the pauper side and with which achievers have the most problems. We tend to be long on the head and short on the heart. It is the heart which is knocking at your gate. To repent is to get in touch with your pauper within. It is the weak, helpless, powerless, feeling side of me that, when I give it only crumbs, plunges me into my hell and which, when I let it sit beside me, gives me a glimpse of heaven.

The word for repent also came from the Greek for "later." Religion is what binds us back to ourselves as we think later about what has happened to us. The church are the people who are bound back as they think back. Religion is in retrospect. As we close our Bibles, and think later during the day about a particular parable that is beside us, we may be amazed to find ourselves "spoken to," as we say, by that part of ourselves which we have the most trouble accepting. Something is accepting us. Note the passive again. We find ourselves moving from our table to sit beside the pauper at our gate. Correction: we find ourselves being moved. Remember, the Bible is in our blood. It has its way in us. God is alive. We find ourselves repenting. We feel complete.

It was both a requirement and a gift. Repentance is "the one and only imperative in Jesus' preaching of the kingdom," a scholar

tells us.<sup>3</sup> At the same time it is a gift. "Unless you turn and become like children," Jesus said, "you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). There it is, just like the child in the stable. A child is helpless. Everything a child has, has to be given. Even the ability to fulfill a requirement. The central symbols of our religion, a child and a cross, are the epitome of helplessness, the opposite of achieving. We are saved, made whole, by our "erroneous" opposite.

That is why we say we find ourselves repenting rather than saying we go out and repent. It is passive rather than active. It is spirit rather than self. It is church rather than factory or office or team. We find ourselves being moved from the outer to the inner person. We are amazed to find the story line of our own lives going back and back into a parable that has moved us. We feel complete.

#### Footnotes

1. W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), p. 222.
2. W. Manson, "The Gospel of Luke" in *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary* (New York: Harper, n.d.), p. 191.
3. J. Behm in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), vol. 4, p. 1002.



# THE INNER EMERGES

OCCASIONALLY THINGS FALL APART, even for superachievers. An "erroneous zone" does you in. Such falling apart is necessary if you are to become—and remain—a superachiever. There are two ways to go when you lose your job or your health or a loved one or a relationship or inner peace. One is to let the crisis knock you off balance, and the other is to look for the rock on which you were all along building your life. Finding the rock again is the key to stability. If we are church members as well as superachievers, the rock is there. "Every one . . . who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock" (Matthew 7:24).

## I

Hearing the word is the key to finding the rock. It went all the way back. It was an attempt to get us back in touch with who we are. When we are so serious about our religion that we join a church, we are serious about being bound back to who we are, to the bedrock, as we say, of our personalities.

What was the word? It was many things, of course, but one thing the word was about was what happens when we are thrown off balance and lose touch with the things that matter most about ourselves. One thing that matters most is that we give the inner life its due. When you are building a house, the inside matters. You are going to be living there, and if you do not take the inside seriously, you are not going to have much of a house. You are certainly not going to have one founded on rock.

Take the idea of rock itself as a means of talking about the

inner life, about our pauper side which we feed with the crumbs left over from achieving. It was not just a metaphor Jesus dreamed up. It went all the way back. It had symbolic meaning. The language of symbol is the language of the inner life. And note that it is language. "Every one . . . who hears these words." Jesus did not say every one who sees these sights.

Noah came to rest on a rock, on Mount Ararat. It goes all the way back and is part of us. Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration. He was crucified on a mountain. His parable of the rock is at the end of his Sermon on the Mount. Rock was used as the altar for burning.<sup>1</sup> It was used in the holy of holies as a symbol of the origin of the world and the gates of heaven and hell. Moses got water from the rock. "O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). It was Old Testament stone theology. It was even in the myth of the rock birth of Mithras, in another religion. Temples were thought to come up out of the sea like islands. The earth was thought to come up out of the original flood as a hollow mountain.

So when Jesus talked about rock, he was talking about something that went all the way back in our tradition, all the way back in us. He was binding us back, in the Sermon on the Mount and the parables, to who we are. He was reminding us of our inner as well as outer life. He was attaching us to it, so that when the floods came and the winds blew and the crisis hit we would not fall, because we were founded on the rock of the inner life.

Now the unfortunate thing is that most of us do not spend enough time on the inner life. That is why we are not super-achievers. We do not read the symbols and parables. We do not meditate. We rarely pray. We almost never take our dreams seriously. We remember occasionally something Jesus said from our youth, and that's about it. The rock has become a stumbling block, as Paul put it (Romans 9:33).

There is this split in me between my inner and outer life, and I am spending most of my time on the outer and not enough on the inner. I'm out there painting and planting and mowing and shovelling, but I'm not inside patching and checking out the attic and the closets and, in particular, the living room. I am not liv-

ing in my living room. So, when my crisis comes, in the original Greek my "turning point," I may put up the greatest front you ever saw on the outside, but I may be falling apart inside.

That's where I need the church. The church are the people who go with me on a tour of my house. They go with me from room to room. They help me get back to living on the inside. Speaking of rock, I even come into contact with the so-called pillars of the church. A pillar of the church has been defined as a person who stands still and holds things up. The church are the people who are having trouble living in their living rooms. We share that. And then I go off with them on a tour of their houses.

I came across a word recently when I was in my attic. It is the word *underlive*. Achievers often are underlivers. Whenever we shortchange our inner lives, we're underliving. We're out of touch with who we are. And all we have to do is listen. "Everyone who hears these words of mine." The church are the people who listen with each other. Who, because of their coming together, encourage each other to listen. I saw a superachiever share the Parable of the Lost Sheep with a group of church members once. She said she herself was lost. And the entire room was with her in her lostness. And then others shared theirs. And in that listening with each other they began to be found. It was an example of being in touch with the inner life, of religious education, of superachievers encouraging each other not to underlive, to be the church instead.

## II

"Every one then who hears these words of mine and *does* them." In the second place, the being must be accompanied by the doing. That is how you know it is rock and not sand. The inner life is complemented by the outer. The language of symbol moves on to the language of action. The unconscious moves into consciousness. The noumenal moves into the phenomenal. Faith becomes work. Thought becomes act. The "acts of the apostles," not the meditations. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

Again, we are not dealing with something that Jesus simply happened upon. It went back in his tradition, which is to say it went back in them, which is to say it goes back in us. The Hebrew word for "hear," as we have seen, meant to "obey." There

could be no hearing without doing, no inner without an outer life. It was the tremendous contribution of the prophets and the Hebrew religion that the theology was combined with the sociology. We know the truth in order to do the good. A theology is only so good as its ethic. It is not enough to stay in the living room. We have to go outside.

Every superachiever has an inward and an outward journey. To neglect either is to build the house of one's life on sand. My tendency is to neglect the inward journey. For another, it may be to neglect the outward. It has a lot to do with personality, whether we are introverted or extraverted. But it has a lot more to do with incarnation, and that is where the surprise and the power lie for superachievers. Proof is that we join churches. What Jesus did was give us an example of wholeness, where the inner was incarnated in the outer person, the noumenal in the phenomenal, the god in the human, the being in the doing. And what Jesus is asking us to do when he talks about hearing and then doing the word is to re-incarnate that wholeness. That is the job of churches.

Naturally, this is something for which all superachievers yearn and about which most of them are frustrated. They are out there nailing the clapboards to the side of the house and the living room collapses. They are inside caulking the fireplace and the chimney falls off. When my being is in good shape, my doing is off. When my doing is in good shape, my being is off. It happens all the time, and it would be ultimately frustrating if it were not for the hope we are given in the incarnation. We are not left alone to bootstrap our own wholeness. One man did it, and he says *we can do it too*. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do" (John 14:12). They will be done *through* us. "Work out your own salvation," Paul wrote, "for *God* is at work *in* you" (Philippians 2:12-13).

These are preposterous statements, of course, but helpful. Jesus must have felt something was going for us, or he wouldn't have said what he did. Nor would Paul. They would not have used those words. *God is* what is at work in us to make us whole

in spite of all our "immobilizations." God *is* what is bringing the being up to the doing, the helplessness up to helpfulness. God *is* what is bringing the listening up to the acting, the faith up to the works, the change up to the desire for change. Sure, it doesn't happen all day every day the way it did for Jesus. But it does happen. There *are* moments of wholeness.

I have a superachieving friend who has come into my life in the last year or so and who is for me an incarnation of help. He helps me be myself by reacquainting me with the lost parts of myself. To that extent, we are the church for each other. I have no idea what I bring to him as the church, but I have a very good idea what he brings to me. He brings me help in my helplessness. How does he do it? There are many ways. But the way that means the most to me is not just his exuberant personality. There are plenty of people who are exuberant who do not bring us help. The way he helps me is that he will, in a friendly way, never let me be content with either my being or my doing. Whenever I'm out there charging, he's calling me in to prayer. And whenever I'm in there praying, he's calling me out to charge. The reason that's helpful is that it's catalytic to my wholeness as an achiever. It binds me back to who I am. And the more I am bound the more I am myself. He refuses to let me say, "What does it all add up to?" when I'm out there doing. And he refuses to let me say, "What's the use of doing anything?" when I'm in there being.

And that is, among other things, what Jesus did. The church are the people who do what Jesus did for one another. And they do it in spite of themselves. They do it because they can't help doing it. Because it is *being* done *through* them. Here is the passive again, the tense that grates on achievers because it means they are not active. The word is so powerful that when it is heard it carries with it the seeds of its own obedience. That power *is* God. "Hear, O Israel" (Deuteronomy 6:4). It was, and is, the Jewish daily confession. There was a voice at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17). There was a voice at his transfiguration (Matthew 17:5). The voice heard is the voice obeyed. If it is not obeyed it is not heard.

## III

How do you *know* it is heard? How do you know that the moment of wholeness is there? How do you know that the atonement has happened in your life and you are "at one?" Because you are spontaneous. That is how you know your being and doing have merged. That is how you know you are changing. "Unless you become like children," we have seen Jesus say, "you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Children are spontaneous. I asked a four-year-old why she was happy. She stared at me as though I were out of my mind. There is no way a child can answer that question. Why? Because it is not a question for a child. Their being and doing are one. Not always, of course, but often. And that is why Jesus used the image of the child to merge the inner and the outer life. Achievers often have little time for their children, let alone for their child within. It's different for superachievers.

The word *spontaneous* comes from the root for "of one's own accord," "out of free will." It means we are so in touch with ourselves that we can, as we say, be ourselves. We are free to be who we are in the moment of reincarnation. Spontaneous people laugh a lot. You see that in churches. At least you'd better see it, or it isn't the church. They live in the now. They listen. As my doing moves away from my being, I lose spontaneity. I get nervous, anxious, frenetic. I am all doing and no being. As my being moves away from my doing, I also lose spontaneity. I get morose, depressed, tired. I am all being and no doing. But when I am spontaneous, that is when I know my being and doing have merged and I am in a moment of reincarnation. Of course, I do not know it at the time because then it would not be spontaneous. But I know it in retrospect. Again, religion is in retrospect. "Poetry," said Wordsworth, "is emotion recollected in tranquillity." Religion is spontaneity recollected in tranquillity. I am bound back to who I am.

That is where the rock is when things are falling apart for superachievers. When I am bound back in my doing to my being, that is when I am hearing my self, and doing what I am hearing. He has bound me back to who I am. He has made me at one,

whole. He has brought me peace. He has moved me from being helpless to helped. Is it any accident that the Gospel of Matthew ends with Jesus giving the great commission to the church to "Go . . . and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) on a mountain?

**Footnote**

1. O. Cullmann in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich. Eerdmans, 1968), vol. 6, p. 96.

# 7

## THE SLAVE FREES

IF I AM HONEST and look into myself I see a couple of things going on. On the one hand, I see myself longing for wholeness. On the other hand, I see myself wanting to cope. On the one hand, I see myself eager to live a full, happy life. On the other hand, I see myself spending my time putting the bread on the table. I am hungry for the internal, and I am spending my time on the external. The two need not be antithetical, of course, but for some reason they are. I am in the classic dilemma of serving two masters (Luke 16:13).

### I

My dilemma plays itself out in a couple of ways. For one thing, I do a lot of talking about wholeness. I read the self-help books. I share the latest techniques at cocktail parties. I pray and read the Bible. There is almost a wistfulness to my longing "to be the person I was meant to be." I could even be a mystic, I sometimes think, if only I had the time.

At the same time, while I do a lot of talking and some thinking about "the new life," the fact of the matter is that most of my time is spent attending to the problems of the old one. There are the demands of my job. There are the demands of my home. There are the demands of my drive to actualize myself, in any number of ways. There are even the demands of other people who have an extensive, and rightful, claim on my time.

So I find myself going on year after year attending to the problems of living and neglecting the problems of life. Again, the two are not antithetical, but that is the way they are being played out



in my life. I have lots of time for the outer life and little time for the inner. And that may be all right, of course. I may feel good about it. But the fact of the matter is that, with the passage of time, I am becoming increasingly uncomfortable. My wife and I were out on our weekly date, and as we sat down in the restaurant where the boy had blown a straw wrapper at his girl and it had missed her, creased my ear, and landed on my wife's plate, I said, "Hey, another week has gone by. I can't believe it." And my wistfulness went up a notch.

Now, of course, I can continue to live with my dilemma until I reach the outer limits of my comfort zone. And that, I suppose, is what most of us do. But again, if I am honest, I will see that I am perilously near those outer limits now. I am more and more uncomfortable with the thought that it is quite possible that I could die before I have lived. And that makes for some serious discomfort indeed. I am increasingly at 4:00 A.M. (which is my time for such things) afraid. Not so much afraid that I will die, but afraid that I will die before I have lived. That I will have spent my entire life on the outside. That I will have lived half a life. Half-life is one thing in science, but quite another in living. And the more I shortchange the inner life, the more I pay only lip service to being the person I could be, the more I neglect my helpless side, the more I run the risk of dying before I have lived. My church are the people who share the fear, who tell me, in spite of all their achieving, that they are afraid too. Of course, there are people outside the church who share the same fear. All I am saying is that we share it in the church or it isn't the church.

## II

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Luke 16:13).

The Pharisees laughed. It is in the next sentence. They could not believe it. Of course you could serve both. They were doing it. They were the epitome of external living. Their entire life was bound up in rules. "The Pharisees," Luke says, "who were lovers of money" (Luke 16:14). It was a symbol of the outer life. Their life consisted in the abundance of their possessions (Luke 12:15).

So they were safe. Of course they laughed. They preferred the safety of external living to the risk of internal. The word *mammon* came from the root for "that in which one trusts."<sup>1</sup> The Pharisee in me trusts the external, the thing he can control, the thing around which he can throw rules, the thing which he can possess, the active, achieving things. The disciple in me trusts the internal, the thing he can't control but which controls him, the thing around which there are no rules, the thing which he cannot possess but which possesses him, the passive, superachieving things.

"You fools," Jesus said to the Pharisees (Luke 11:40). It is the ultimate put-down for "rational" livers. Foolish is the opposite of rational. You cannot serve God and mammon. "How long will you go limping with two different opinions?" Elijah asked. "If the Lord is God, then follow him. If the Lord is Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). "Repent," Jesus said (Mark 1:14). Turn before it is too late. Turn away from the half-life and toward the full. Look at how you *are being* turned. It *is* happening in your life. You are afraid that you will die before you have lived? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). That fear *is* God in your life. It is *not* an "erroneous zone." That is not all God is, but God is at least that. That is why it is a gift. It is grace. You long for wholeness? "Be ye therefore perfect" (Matthew 5:48). As we have seen, it meant, "Be ye therefore whole." That longing for wholeness *is* God in your life.

Listen to your longing. Hear your fear. Be a disciple. Live the internal life and the external will take care of itself. "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on" (Matthew 6:25). They are all externals. "Is not *life* more than food, and the body more than clothing" (Matthew 6:25)? Live the internal life and the external will take care of itself. Rather than living the external life and letting the internal take care of itself, which is what most achievers do. That is being a Pharisee. It didn't work for them and it won't work for us. Be a disciple.

### III

But how? How do I come over from external to internal living? How do I move from self-reliance to helplessness? How do I move from serving the external to serving the internal master? How do I

move from mammon to God, from surface to depth, from partial to whole, from trusting what I do to trusting who I am, from trusting what I possess to trusting what possesses me? "No servant can serve two masters."

By being as smart about your inner as you are about your outer life. That is how Jesus put it. The children of light are to become as "wise" as the children of the world (Luke 16:18). It was the same word he used for those who founded their houses on rock (Matthew 7:24). You are smart about your outer life. You cope well. Indeed, we cope so well that, like the unjust steward, we know nearly all the angles. We can even shave a point here and there, cut a corner. Somebody owes the boss something; the boss gives us a poor performance review; we see a way to ingratiate ourselves with his debtors; we let each of them settle with us for less; then, when we are fired for poor performance, we can find a job with one of them. Achievers are adept at putting that bread on the table.

Now be as sharp, Jesus is saying, in putting the bread on your inner table, in feeding your soul. "The sons of this world are wiser . . . than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8). They spend so much time at what they are doing that they become competent. They are even praised by their bosses for their competence. Spend *as much time* on your inner life. Become as competent. Be as much an executive of the inner life as you are of the outer. That is all Jesus is saying. Plan, perform, review, set up goals and objectives just as much for your inner as you do for your outer life. Superachievers do that.

But I spend forty to sixty hours a week on my job. Are you saying to spend as much on the "new me"? No. Jesus is saying spend more. He is saying spend all our time on the "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Then job and home and everything else become part of our pursuit of wholeness. But isn't that just semantics? How is that helpful? It is helpful because of the symbol Jesus used. Remember, the word *symbol* comes from the words for "throw" and "together." And when Jesus used this word he threw us together with a power that we can image, that we can imagine, that we can keep before us every hour to throw us together with our inner life. He used that word the early Christians used to describe themselves. He used the word *slave*. "No slave can serve two masters." It is a word like "child" and "cross" and "pauper" and

"helpless." A word with which achievers are uncomfortable because it smacks of negative thinking which is "erroneous" thinking.

A slave had no time of his or her own, so that solved that problem right there. Furthermore, a slave had no possessions, so that solved that problem. There was no way a slave could be bound to his possessions since he had none. Thus the slave was free to be bound to God. He was free to be "bound back" to his inner life. Still further, the slave had no will, so that solved yet another problem. He could do nothing that he was not ordered to do by his master. Thus he was freed to bind his doing back to his being. He was freed to see his doing springing from his being. The external was coming from the internal life rather than, as the Pharisees hoped, the internal would spring from the external. The bread on the table was springing from the bread of life. What I do springs from what I am. What I possess comes from what possesses me. *The slave is more important than the prince in personality development.* The "erroneous zone" is bearing the *truth* about who I am. The one who says he can do nothing is more important than the one who says he can do everything.

In spite of all my best efforts, they add up to only 49 percent personality change. I cannot be saved by works. They do not work. Indeed, many would argue, with Paul, the former Pharisee, that all my best efforts add up to 0 percent. "I am nothing," he said (2 Corinthians 12:11). "By the grace of God, I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). It is the ultimate delusion to think I can do *anything* to bind myself back to the rest of who I am. Nothing could be more erroneous. "I *worked* harder than any of them, though *it was not I*, but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). More than all the self-help in modern psychology, which deals with the external, achieving, can-do self, it is experiences like Paul's which deal with the internal, passive, can't-do, helpless self which bind us back to who we are, which make us whole, which give us new life, which "actualize" us, get us "thinking positively," free us from "erroneous zones." And they can happen whether we have worked like crazy on ourselves or done *no work at all*. Or done the work, like Paul, only to feel it added up to "nothing."

## IV

It was at this point that Jesus came down hard. He was a realist. And even though he had given them a good image, even though all the first Christians were to refer to themselves as his "slaves," still he knew that many of them had possessions. They were symbolic slaves but not always literal. He came down hard on possessions.

Possessions are a symbol of the outer life. They are a symbol in our culture of achieving. They are a symbol of what I do. The more I do the more I possess. The better I perform the better I'm paid. It has even gotten to the point where we measure ourselves by what we earn. If I earn a lot, then I mean a lot. And that may often be true, externally. But the tough question is, what does it mean internally? It may mean that the more I do the less I am. The better I perform outside the less well I perform inside. The shrewder I am in my job the less shrewd I am in my growth.

Now it doesn't have to work out that way. That is why we say, "It may be," rather than "It will be" or "It is." But the problem to the realist, Jesus, was clear. It was that mammon would beat God. We would serve the outer more than the inner master, which is precisely what the self-help psychologies do. They claim that you can go from outer to inner living by using the same can-do tools for the one that we use for the other. It can't be done. Jesus knew all too well that we would see all these things we were doing and forget all these things we were capable of being. The Pharisee in us would beat the disciple. The achiever would beat the super-achiever. It didn't have to work out that way, but it could. And, human nature being what it is, Jesus, the realist, was afraid that it would. There were thousands of Pharisees, only twelve disciples. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," he said, "than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24). It is easier for us to do than to be. It is easier for us to possess than to be possessed. It is easier for us to trust our active than our passive selves, our outer than our inner life, the achiever in us rather than the slave. In a word, it is easier for us to serve mammon than God.

## V

It is at this point that Jesus hit on a way to catch the being up to the doing, to convert the Pharisee into a disciple, the partial into a whole person. And it was at this point that the Pharisees laughed. They couldn't see it. It was just too much for them to handle. Maybe that is why Jesus said only three sentences later, "The good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently" (Luke 16:16). Moving from the outer to the inner person creates a good old-fashioned crisis. In particular, it does violence to the ego. The ego is the external amasser. It is the rich man who turns away sorrowing from the demands of the inner riches. The word *mammon* is the Aramaic for "riches." And what Jesus is challenging us to be is as rich on the inside as we are on the outside, to be as richly possessed as we possess. Immediately he goes into the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the poor man (Luke 16:19-31). In the Parable of the Steward, "make friends for yourselves" means "give to the poor" (Luke 16:9).

In other words, the idea Jesus hit on, which, of course, was deep within his tradition and which he only repristinated, was that the way achievers avoid being possessed by their possessions, which is to say the way we avoid living only external or half lives, is to view our possessions, no matter how little or how much, as something to be shared with those who have less. The bridge, or at least a bridge, from the outer to the inner life is sacrifice. And I can empathize with that bridge. Because it is a sacrifice for me to move from the area where I can achieve in my outer life to the area where I suddenly become a nonachiever in my inner life, and everything I do has to be done *for* me. It is a sacrifice for me to move from the area where I can cope and where, after a number of years, I have become quite shrewd at the game, into the area where I cannot cope *at all*, where, as that early church member said, "I am nothing" and anything but shrewd, or, to use Jesus' word, anything but "wise."

However, the amazing thing is that superachievers *find* themselves moving, from outer to inner, from surface to depth. The slave *is being moved* by the master. The church are the moved, not the movers. It could not be *me* giving my money away. I like my possessions too much. It could not be me tithing. That does too much violence to my normal way of doing things. It could not be

me giving up external for internal living. It *has* to be God. It can't be me. *I* do not act that way. But I *am* that way. That is what the parables are telling me. They are "binding me back" to who I am, not to what I want to be but to what I *was all along*. At my deepest, my most inner self, I *am* one who shares. The church is known for what it shares. Churches that are not giving away at least as much as they spend on themselves are not yet really churches. They have not yet "achieved" as churches even though they may be full of achievers.

But even more than the stories, it is the history that is binding me back to my inner life. God is beating mammon. The one who possesses me is beating the one I possess. Jesus is saving me from my dilemma. Even more compelling than the Parable of the Unjust Steward is the sacrifice of the unjustly killed Christ. In his sacrifice, I find myself moved, in spite of myself, to sacrifice. In his sacrifice, in a way I will never fully understand, the disciple in me is being merged with the Pharisee. The change is occurring. The new creation is being born. In his sacrifice, the slave is meeting the master. The inner and the outer life are becoming one. I am becoming whole at last. "With his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

#### Footnote

1. F. Hauck in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), vol. 4, p. 388.

# 8

## THE BLOOD HEALS

TO SUMMARIZE: Religion is the process by which superachievers are bound back to who they are. The inner and the outer marry. Our being unites with our doing. What we are, combines with what we do. The split, which causes us so much "erroneous" anxiety, pain, worry, depression is healed. We are made whole. The two are momentarily "at one." We are at peace. It happens through sacrifice. It also happens through sacrament.

A sacrament is anything that binds superachievers back to who they are. The binding back is a holy process. The word *sacrament* comes from the root for "holy." The search for the Holy Grail is the search for who we are. As the inner catches up with the outer life we become who we are. It may not last long. It may only be for a moment. But it is in that moment that we know. It is the height of rationality. We know that we were whole all along.

The blood of Christ is a sacrament. It binds us back to who we are. It has enormous power. It does what the self-help books cannot. Along with symbol and parable, it is the 51 percent that enables us to be who we are. As indicated before, many would argue it is the 100 percent. We think of ourselves as the top of an iceberg. The bottom 6/7 are family, then clan, then nation, then our Western culture, then our hemisphere, then our primitive ancestors.<sup>1</sup> And when we deal with blood, we go all the way back, all the way down.

### I

It goes back to the myth of the dying god—Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Dionysius, long before Jesus. It goes back to the cultic



meals of Artemis, Mithras, Aesculapius, and the Delphic priests.<sup>2</sup> It goes back to the earliest known period of human culture and the sacrament of eating the god, to barley, the oldest cereal cultivated by the Aryan race, by the Stone Age lake dwellers in Europe, and used in the religious rituals of the ancient Hindus.<sup>3</sup> "The underlying thought," explains an expert, "is that of communion, of union of those who eat with the deity."<sup>4</sup> Of the union of the opposites in us. Of the union of being with doing, of the inner with the outer life, of the real me with the mask, of achieving with superachieving.

Deep within us it is the blood that heals us. At our deepest level, going all the way back, long before Jesus, the blood of human victims was shed over the barley that it might grow.<sup>5</sup> We are completely out of touch with that now. But *it is not out of touch with us*. It is deep within our inner being. And the proof is that superachievers *find* themselves meeting as churches, drawn by the blood of an innocent victim, shed over the barley of their lives that they too might grow.

It is our essence coming into existence. Blood is the essence of life. There is nothing more essential. It is the ultimate sacrifice. In the act of communion it becomes a sacrament. It binds superachievers back to who they are. It binds them back to God. God *is* what turns sacrifice into a sacrament. Again, that is not all God is, but God is at least that. God *is* what makes the inner and the outer person one. You don't have to do anything. The passive is that powerful. Of course, if it is your personality to do all that you can to change yourself, go to it. It may be that many of us *have* to do everything before we realize we can do nothing. Or, at the most, very little. Never more than that 49 percent. And if we are ever going to change, we have to *be* changed because, try as we will, with countless self-help books and countless hours with therapists and counselors and groups, we cannot change ourselves.

From primitive times blood was numinous.<sup>6</sup> That is, it carried the power of God. It was the seat of life, the soul, the divine. It belonged only to God. Therefore, the ancient Hebrews were forbidden to eat it. And for the same reason, the priestesses of Apollo drank it in order to commune with God, as do church members symbolically. Blood is the greatest gift from God.

Therefore it is the greatest gift to God. "With his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus had to die. "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things?" Jesus asked (Luke 24:26). The binding back would not have worked for superachievers without his death, without his blood. It had to be that powerful. When achievers are out there achieving, something has to be powerful to throw them together with being. The first image Christians had of Jesus was the image of the Suffering Servant. He had to be sacrificed in order for the sacrament to have such power that it binds superachievers back 2,000 years later and will bind others 2,000 years from now. It is precisely that power which the self-help books omit. They neglect the very power that will enable their readers to be whole!

Deep within us the blood is binding us back to who we are. There is a dynamism in the sacrament which is beyond us but within us. It is beyond our comprehension but within our being, beyond our minds but in our hearts. It is far more than a simple memorial meal. If that were all it is, it would never have lasted. It goes down to the bottom layer of who we are. The bottom line, as we say in business. "I am the vine," Jesus said (John 15:1). The vine had to be crushed. The blood had to flow.

The blood has to flow to bind us back to who we are. For the outer to go against the inner life is a crucifixion. We are shedding the blood of the inner life all the time when we do not give it time. "Blood spilled," writes an expert, "requires more blood to pay the debt. The books must be balanced. (It is) the law of the conservation of psychic energy. . . . There must be blood for blood."<sup>7</sup>

## II

Jesus gets the blood flowing again. From the crucifixion of the inner self we are moved to the sacrifice of the outer self. We give up only external living. We give up only emphasizing our doing. We move on to being. We move on to the inner life. It is the sacrifice of Christ, caught in the sacrament, that empowers us to make our sacrifice. Moses took the blood of the sacrifice and threw it against the rock of the altar (Exodus 24:6).<sup>8</sup> That symbolized the inner life. Then he threw the other bowl of blood against the worshipers themselves. That symbolized the outer

life. It was the blood that made them one. We have lost touch with that. But it has not lost touch with us.

The communion is a symbol of oneness. In many services the communicants stand around the table to symbolize that wholeness. In the communion, through the symbol of the blood of Christ, our outer selves are at last thrown together with our inner.

He is our peace (wrote an astonished first Christian), who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility . . . that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two (Ephesians 2:14-15).

They would slay a lamb in the desert and walk between the two halves. It was a covenant. They were together. The two warring parties were now at peace. The lamb of God had to be slain. Our ancestors, going all the way back, would cut each other, drink each other's blood, establish a covenant between each other, form a blood brotherhood. We have lost touch with that. But it has not lost touch with us. Not when we go down, all the way down, into the inner life.

"Any food which two (people) partake of together so that the same substance enters . . . their flesh and blood," writes an historian of the inner life, "is enough to establish some sacred unity of life between them." We think we have lost touch with that, but we haven't. Whenever we eat together we are thrown together. It is a symbol of our oneness. When we want to do something with people that symbolizes our closeness to them we invite them over for dinner. Or we go out with them to eat. It goes all the way back. In the sacrament of eating and drinking we are being bound back to who we are. To whole rather than partial life. "I have been away for so long," a superachiever said with tears in his eyes after a worship service. Another with tears in his said, "Something spoke to me today."

The tears are essential. They are the outward sign of the inward blood. They prove the essence breaking through to existence. They are the crisis we all need to change. There is no way you can go from partial to whole life without tears, something the self-help books tend to miss with their simple nostras. The tears are themselves a symbol of the sacrifice that has to be made of living solely externally. "Repression is internal murder,"<sup>10</sup> writes

a psychiatrist. And we are going to get paid back in sickness, guilt, anguish, depression, worry—all of which we do not understand and therefore label “erroneous,” when the truth is that all such “negative” psychological states are bringing us the rest of who we are.

The voice of Abel’s blood cried to Cain from the ground (Genesis 4:10). The external man had killed the internal. We even take the killing outside ourselves because we don’t want to deal with it inside. We take it out on spouses, children, friends. We even create enemies. We express the repression of our inner lives and sacrifice people on the altar of our achievements. Who did you last sacrifice? Whose blood did you shed? Who did you fire that you could advance? Who did you hurt because you were hurting? We carry our externalizing all the way to projection, which is the ultimate in external living. And, because we won’t come in, we shed a lot of blood. Whose blood have you shed? Who therefore is Jesus for you? From whom do you need forgiveness? By whose stripes are you being healed? Father, mother, sister, brother, husband, wife, employee, friend? At whose table do you no longer eat? By the same token, who sacrificed you? Who do you need to forgive?

What part of my inner life do I sacrifice? What part of the rest of me do I repress? My religion, confirmed to me in the sacrament, wants to heal me. “This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:27–28). Sin is when I am two people. It is when the Good Samaritan does not appear. It is when the pauper cannot eat with the prince. It is when I am split between who I am and who I long to be. It is living on the outside when I am hungry for the inside. That is why the Word of God is food for hungry people. That is why there are tears. We are being called home. We are being bound back. Our essence is calling to us from the ground of our being. It is the voice of that part of us from which we are most estranged. It is the voice of God. And it cries to us through the blood of his Son. In the communion meal. Among the church. As each of us cries out to be whole.

#### Footnotes

1. V. C. G. Jung in B. Hannah, *Jung: His Life and Work* (New York: Putnam, 1976), p. 17.

2. H. Schlier in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), vol. 2, p. 34.
3. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 463, 554.
4. H. Schlier, *loc. cit.*
5. Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 500f.
6. E. F. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (New York: Putnam, 1972), p. 227.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

# 9

## THE DESPISED EMBRACES

WHENEVER I GO UP TO THE TEMPLE to pray, two people go with me. One is my outer self, symbolized by the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14. The other is my inner self, symbolized by the publican, the tax collector. One is the part of me that emphasizes doing. The other is the part of me that emphasizes being. One is the part that lays great store in achieving. The other is the part that lays great store in being achieved through. The one is active, the other passive. The one confident, the other timid. The one is bursting with self-reliance. The other, if I am honest, is helpless.

One way to deal with our twoness longing for oneness is to remind ourselves that our personality split is the classic antinomy, or opposition. On the one hand, St. Paul summarizes for all of us, there was the law of his mind. On the other hand, there was the law in his members opposing the law in his mind. "I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" (Romans 7:22-23). We are two people. There is the divine self within and the human self without. It is one thing to help yourself. It is another to be helped.

The problem is compounded as I naturally gravitate toward one of the two poles. "Something there is that doesn't love a wall," Robert Frost wrote. And something there is that doesn't love a balance. We tend to identify with one of our two poles. We are what we do, for instance. Our being is wrapped up in our doing.

Our validity comes from what we achieve. So, as we fail to achieve, we feel that we fail as persons. We lose self-worth. And when we lose self-worth all sorts of things happen. The bad grades at school or office trigger bad behavior at home. And bad behavior at home triggers bad behavior elsewhere. It all comes from having identified our value with our performance. It is a disease to which our culture succumbs. Proof is the loss of identity which comes with the loss of a job. Proof is the loss of self-worth when we fail to make the team or fail to keep up our "worry list" for "rational living."

By the same token, it is conceivable that superachievers, in an access of correction, could identify with their being. In this case we are what we are regardless of our doing. Our doing is wrapped up in our being. Our validity comes from the inside alone and so we let our outside slip. We even devalue the outside by depersonalizing it with our dress. We hide it with an unkempt appearance or merge it with the crowd in a pin-stripe appearance. More important, we let the performance standards slip. Not always, of course, but often enough to prove that most of us tend to gravitate rather than balance. We say that what we do no longer matters because it is what we are that counts. And that may be true, up to a point.

Certainly what we are is what counts, but what we do counts too. And when what we do no longer counts and, as we say, anything goes, that is when the antinomy, the tension within us between being and doing, between helplessness and self-help, becomes antinomianism, i.e. the tension is lost as we give up on the doing. It was one of the earliest heresies of the Christian church that, so long as I believe right, anything I do is right. The faith validates whatever works. That too is heresy, and, although it may be less prevalent in our country than the doing disease, the being heresy has been playing catch-up ball in the 1960s and '70s.

Obviously, the trick is to strike a balance between the doing and the being, between the outer and the inner self. It is to get the two back in touch with each other. It is to get them together. The word *hypocrite* comes from the Greek for "separate." The word *Pharisee* comes from the Aramaic for "separate." We are hypocritical when we separate the inner from the outer self, when

we masquerade as together when we are, in fact, separate. We are monastic when we live only an inner life. And we are pharisaical when we separate inner from outer and live only an outer life. "That he (Jesus) might create in himself," we have seen the writer to the Ephesians write, "one new man (unseparated) in place of the two, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:15). That is why superachievers find themselves in churches. The church is the place where, potentially at least, the two can become one and we can be at peace. One person can be born out of two in the following ways.

## I

First, superachievers have to be upset by their unbalanced lives. If we have gravitated to either pole and are not upset, the chances of achieving that peace, or wholeness, which is the goal of psychology are probably remote. Of course, it could be argued that if you are at either pole and are not upset because you view your living there as not unbalanced, then you have the peace already. And that is all right, if you want to argue it that way. If that way works for you, fine. All I can do is witness to the other side—namely, that in the spiritual laboratory where I work, in a church and in myself, it doesn't seem to work out that way. Lives that identify with either pole are upset. They tend to be hypocritical.

The American church is full of doers. You can read about their achievements in the newspapers and the corporate reports and the annual reports of the volunteer agencies. But they are in church. That is proof that achievers want to catch their being up with their doing, that they are upset with their upsetness. By the same token, the church are the people who are out there on the Mondays and Tuesdays trying to catch their doing up to their being. They are upset about leading only an inner life. As we would not be Pharisees, so we would not be monks. We want to beat pharisaism, and we want to beat monasticism. In both cases, we want to beat hypocrisy.

Now it seems to me, as I reflect in my laboratory, that the only way to merge the being and the doing, the only way to round out the yin and the yang of life, the only way to get the peace that we all long for, is to pay attention to our upsetness as



it happens. This is why going to the hospital, for instance, can be a gift. When you are flat on your back waiting for surgery you can see very quickly that you have been involved in polarized living. When our very existence itself is threatened, we are given a tremendous motivation to gravitate to our essence, our wholeness, our balance.

Jess Lair has helped us all by giving us such books as *I Ain't Much Baby, But I'm All I've Got* and *I Ain't Well, But I Sure Am Better*. Jess was an ad agency executive when he had a heart attack at thirty-five. He discovered that his whole life had been caught up in doing, and now he wanted to catch his being up to his doing. He quit his ad agency, moved his family to a farm, which he had always wanted to do, got his Ph.D., and is now teaching, which he had always wanted to do, and writing, which he had always wanted to do. It was a gift when his body rebelled against his polarization. Talk about peace, Jess Lair, I have a hunch, is well on his way toward peace, toward "wholeness," which, as we have seen, is what the word *peace* means at its Hebraic root.

Now of course, we don't all go to the hospital or lose a job or a loved one or have something happen on such a dramatic order that we are forced, in effect, to realize that we are leading a polarized, upset, unbalanced, hypocritical, "warring," to use Paul's word, life. Which is why we have to pay attention to the various forms of upsetness, or crises, that are going on within us *all the time*. And that is where the parables are helpful. As we have seen, they "throw" us "beside" ourselves. They reveal our upsetness. We don't have to go to the hospital. All we have to do is read. Simplistic? Perhaps. But better the simplism of reading than the complexity of surgery. It was such a "simplistic" thing for the Pharisee and the publican to go to the temple and pray. But the one was in touch with his unbalanced life, while the other was not. Why is it the one was and the other wasn't?

## II

It's hard to say, of course, but I think we have a glimmer, and this is a second thing to be said about how to create one new person in place of the two and so be at peace. The publican was, to use Jesus' word, humble. "Everyone who exalts himself

will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). The humble person is the person who is attuned to his or her unbalanced life. Humble people realize that they don't, as we say, have it all together. They realize that they have gravitated to one pole and do not have the inner and the outer bound back to each other. You have to be humble to realize that. You have to be humble to check yourself out in the mirror and say, "Look, I've been so performance-oriented that I've become a Pharisee." Or, "I've become so inner-directed that I've become a monk."

The publican is the one who realizes, in such little things as a prayer, that his outer life has gotten completely away from his inner. The publican recognizes his hypocrisy. Tax collectors were symbols of greed, which is itself a symbol of polarization to the outer life. They were so detested that they were not even allowed in the doors to worship. And here he is saying, "Look, I've really blown it. 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' (Luke 18:13). I am split. I have allowed the split to continue. I am two people. I want to be one. I want to be 'at one.' I want to be whole. I want to be healed. I want to be at peace." God is what catches our being up to our doing. And we can only realize that in humility.

It is interesting that most of us do realize this and have already begun to play it out in our lives. But then we somehow lose it. Because we are two people, as we have seen, we marry someone who will heal us. Or, if we are not married, we have a friend who will heal us. If we tend to gravitate more to doing, we marry someone who gravitates more to being. It is our attempt, and a significant one, to become whole. And we have constantly to remind ourselves of that fact. Which is why an experience like a Marriage Enrichment weekend can be valuable. It gets us back in touch with the process we started when we married. It humbles us. It reminds us that we married the other in order to help us become one with ourselves. We married in order to find peace, or at least to start our search for peace.

What happens is that, because achievers tend to lack humility, we get out of touch, not just with the other in marriage or friendship, but with the other in *us*. We come home from the office, for instance, where we have been the doer all day and neglect to

embrace the be-er even when he or she is standing right there in the door. Right in front of us is the symbol of ourselves binding us back to ourselves and we do not embrace the other without, let alone the other within. And so we are both crying inside for each other. And we are not humble enough to admit it.

### III

Which leads to a third way to create one new person in place of the two and so be at peace. I don't think achievers can be humble on their own. At least I can't. All we can do is speak for ourselves. And maybe share the testimony of others. Matthew was a tax collector. He may have been the publican of the story. We don't know. It may be Jesus told the story primarily for the benefit of Matthew. Again, we don't know. But what we do know is that Matthew lived out his religious process, his "binding back," with twelve other people, Jesus and the eleven other disciples. They found they couldn't be humble without a small group. They found that they could not stop gravitating to one of their two poles without a small group. They found that they did not know how to be healed, made whole, "actualized," without the humble ministry to each of them of a small group of wounded healers. That's the church. The church are the people who know they cannot "achieve" their wholeness alone under a tree.

The small group I am in is getting together this week as I write. On Thursday night we'll be at one of the homes of one of the upset people in our church, and there isn't one of us who hasn't looked forward to this time for the three weeks since we last met. We even at the last meeting drew postcards from a pile and wrote a little note to each other half way during our time apart. I drew the name of a man who means a lot to me and who has ministered to my being side ever since I met him in an office high over Chicago, with all the trappings of achievement, where our time together had been so rich that he and I and the man in whose office we were meeting ended our time together, crazy as it may sound, humbling as it may sound, with our arms around each other. And I sent him this little postcard. And I said on it that I loved him. And then from the person who had drawn *my* name I got a two-page single-spaced typewritten letter which said the same.

## IV

All of which leads to a fourth way for us to be at one with the Pharisee and publican in us. It is the way of Christ. "He humbled himself," Paul wrote, "and became obedient unto death" (Philippians 2:7). According to Paul, Jesus gave up his identification with being in order to do. Just as most of us would do well to give up our identification with doing in order to be. He emptied himself. He humbled himself. He refused to identify himself with one pole. He corrected his imbalance. He took the form of a slave, which is the ultimate symbol of humility. The slave takes orders. The outer is a reflection of the inner. His doing springs from his being. In the symbol of Jesus as a slave, we have the perfect symbol of one who does what he is, rather than, as the Pharisee and the achiever, one who is what he does. It is that symbol which is working on us in churches. We *find* ourselves in churches *because* of that symbol.

But how does that move us to pay attention to our unbalanced lives, be humble, share our unbalanced lives with others? Is it really necessary to know? Or is all that is necessary simply to return to our spiritual laboratory and observe? Look at the facts. Look at what has happened in your life because of Christ. That symbol is so powerful that you find yourself in a church perhaps. You might have preferred to spend your free time differently, but you find yourself choosing a church.

You find yourself sharing yourself. You are amazed at that because you never considered yourself a sharing person. It was one of your "erroneous zones." But you find yourself embracing the other at your door. And you are amazed at that because your image of your self is as a doer, and suddenly the image is beaten by the symbol as you embrace the be-er.

You even find yourself spending all kinds of time on your inner life if you are an outer person and on your outer life if you are an inner person. And you are amazed at that because you never dreamed it would be possible. You never dreamed you would be at that Marriage Enrichment weekend, or a house church, or performing so well on your job.

How can it be? How can it be that you are alive? You accept it. How can it be that you are gifted in one way or another? You accept it. Why, then, accept too the power that the symbol

of the one who humbled himself has in you. Accept the grace of it. Accept the fact that he *is* balancing your unbalanced life. That he is throwing you with yourself. That he is creating one new person in place of the two. That he is making you whole. The church is full of humbled superachievers who are working for the sole purpose of getting each other to accept those things. Correction: who are being worked through.

# 10

## THE RIDER CONFRONTS

THE USE OF THE PALM, like the blood, went all the way back. It was sacred from earliest Semitic times.<sup>1</sup> It was essential to life in the desert, so it became a symbol of fecundity.<sup>2</sup> It was used in the temple, on the coins, on the sculpture.<sup>3</sup> It became a symbol for victory since it symbolized life itself.<sup>4</sup> And it was used 200 years before Jesus, when Simon Maccabeus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem after his defeat of the Syrian invader, Antiochus Euphron.<sup>5</sup>

There is disagreement among the experts, but the weight of evidence seems to suggest that the Passover crowds viewed Jesus as the conquering messiah, the great achiever. They used the palms as they had for Simon Maccabeus. They put their clothes on the colt and on the ground, as they did when Jehu was acclaimed king.<sup>6</sup> They shouted, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Mark 11:9), "He who comes" being another name for the Messiah.<sup>7</sup> They shouted "Hosannah," a cry by oppressed people to their savior and king.<sup>8</sup> It meant "save now."<sup>9</sup> And they shouted from Psalm 118 when they said "Blessed be he who comes," a psalm composed to commemorate that day when Simon Maccabeus purified the Temple in 163 B.C.<sup>10</sup>

### I

The only trouble, of course, was that Jesus was not that kind of messiah. The crowd had made a classic mistake. They were praising the messiah they wanted rather than the messiah Jesus

was. They were praising their image of what the messiah should be. He was the conquering hero, the political savior, the one who would restore Israel to its former greatness, the ultimate achiever. They praised him for his doing, not for his being. For what he had done and what he would do, not for who he was. "The whole multitude . . . began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen" (Luke 19:37). It is the classic mistake of parents. It is also the classic mistake of achievers.

They were cheering the doer, and the be-er was dying inside. So long as he lived up to their image of him, they would cheer. So long as he made the team. So long as he got straight A's. They cheered the projected Messiah. They didn't make the team. They didn't get straight A's. I want most in you what I see least in myself. They praised his doing, his mighty works. That is why he told them to be silent whenever he did one. He knew they would fix on what he did rather than on who he was. Even in the transfiguration, as they came down the mountain, he said, "Tell no one" (Matthew 17:9). He knew they would not understand. They would go for the outer—his face "shone" (Matthew 17:2)—rather than the inner, for doing not being.

"He has done extremely well," we say of a successful person. But what has he been? He may have been dying inside as he stepped on people, tore up his family, turned to drink or drugs, worked six and seven days a week. I will cheer you as long as you live up to my image of you. I will even cheer myself as long as I live up to my image of myself as a doer. And then I lose my job, the symbol of my doing life. Or I fail to make an advancement and am plateaued at forty. What then? Where are the crowds then? They had all vanished by the end of the week. Why? Because he had not done what they expected. What they projected. So they left him. Whenever I falter in my doing, the cheering stops. I am not a good homemaker. I am not a good executive. I am not a good student. I am not a good athlete. I cannot get rid of my "erroneous zones." And the cheering stops. Because I feel I am no longer a good person. I am split from who I am.

## II

Make no mistake, people who emphasize doing are powerful

people. They have brought us the scientific, industrial, cultural wonders of our age. I'll never forget how I turned to leave the office of a young executive and saw the quote framed at door-knob level so he would be sure to see it whenever he left. "Remember," it said, in the words of a well-known millionaire businessman, "the people who get ahead are the people who work on Saturday and Sunday too."

There is power—if not peace—in splitting your life and sitting back and taking in the cheers. One of the greatest days of my life was when I discovered that I was graduating from college with good grades. For four years I had dedicated myself to the heady power of the doing life. And for four years I had walked by the college president's garden and never had time for the flowers. I had split the nuclear person and basked in the heady power of personal fission.

But there is more power in nuclear fusion than fission. And the key to our problem of achieving is, as we have seen, to heal the split within each of us between doing and being. To fuse the outer and the inner person. To keep the cheers for the be-er coming when the doer does not live up to expectations. As, incidentally, it never will. We will never be as good a homemaker, executive, student, person as we know we could or should or would. Just listen to yourself next time someone praises you for something. You will invariably hear yourself saying, "Oh, I could have done it better."

### III

However, Jesus did not discourage their cheers. He encouraged them. He deliberately provoked them. He rode the colt, which was the symbol of the Messiah (Zechariah 9:9). He went immediately to the cleansing of the Temple, which could be interpreted as a deliberate reference to Simon Maccabeus or the messianic expectation of Malachi 3:1. Earlier we read that he deliberately "set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him" (Luke 9:51). He chose the Mount of Olives as the place from which to come, another messianic reference (Zechariah 14:9). He allowed himself to be called king, the charge on which he was to be executed. He even expected their cheers: "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40).



One way to fuse being and doing is not to give up cheering for doing. It is to add cheering for being. It is even to be hoped that cheering for doing will lead to cheering for being. It didn't. But conceivably it could have. He didn't stop their cheers. Something is in that. It must have worked. Some in the crowd went beyond cheering for doing to cheering for being. Within weeks the disciples were risking their lives as they told the entire world who he was. As I praise you for what you do, I can move to praising you for who you are.

Once I was on a retreat, and one of the stipulations of the weekend was that you tell no one what you did for a living. So we had all these people together and no one knew what anyone else did. No one could ask the age-old question, "What do you do?" until the end of the weekend when we all asked it at the same time. We went around the table and tried to guess what each one did. We had related to each other for an entire forty-eight hours at the being level, and as we went around the table and got back into doing it was fun to see everyone guess what everyone else did. They thought I was a computer salesman. Ironically, for me, it is a symbol of achieving.

#### IV

We also fuse the inner and the outer person when we recognize that we are not entirely responsible for our dilemma. We have inherited it. That may or may not be helpful, of course. It is not helpful if it leads us away from responsibility for fusing. It is helpful if it provides the motivation which cognition often does. *Recognition* means "to know again" what we have known all along but have forgotten. When I bring something up to consciousness I can often deal with it better.

It all began in the seventeenth century. Writing in the early part of the century, Francis Bacon gave us the inductive method, which was certainly a welcome balance to the deductive method, but which widened the split dramatically. With the inductive method, which is responsible in turn for the empirical method and many of our scientific advances, you reason from the particular to the general. You form a conclusion after you have observed the facts. Clearly, that is an excellent way to think. The only trouble with it is that it tended to call into question many of the conclusions from which

one reasoned to particulars in the prior thirty centuries. The split widened. It need not have. But it did.

René Descartes then carried things a step further for all of us when he said about the same time, *Cogito ergo sum*: "I think, therefore I am." That too is fine, make no mistake. The only trouble with it was that the thinker left the feeler, and the doer was split from the be-er. God and nature were now separated.<sup>11</sup> Mind and body were estranged. Inner and outer were split. The active left the passive. Self-help left helplessness. And we are now the beneficiaries of what is called Cartesian rationalism, where we put great emphasis in schools and jobs and homes and churches on how we think and next to no emphasis on how we feel. And that, of course, is a serious matter.

## V

Fortunately, the fusion of essence and existence, of being and doing, of feeling and thinking, *is* taking place in all of us all the time, if only we have eyes to see and ears to hear. The inner person just will not leave the outer person alone. Indeed, it has several centuries of catching up to do, and it is catching up all the time. That is why the great mathematician of the same seventeenth century, Blaise Pascal, recognizing what might happen, said in his brilliant and moving *Pensées*, "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know."

It is also why Jesus rode into Jerusalem. He deliberately provoked the confrontation between the head and the heart. If the cheers for what he did were ever going to be turned into cheers for who he was, there would have to be confrontation. There would have to be a crisis. It has been said that the longest distance in the world is the eighteen inches between the head and the heart, and the only way for that distance to be overcome, for "progress," as we say, to be made, is for the unconscious to become conscious, for emotions to fuse with thoughts, for being to fuse with doing. And the only way for that to happen is for each of us to change our life-style and see how Jesus is riding not, as we say, into our hearts, but into our heads. That recognition may be painful. The Christian faith is realistic about suffering. But on that recognition rests the key to personal fusion in our day, which is the key to what we call wholeness.

Your heart is getting in touch with your head when you feel as well as think. Trust your emotions. Accept them. Do not put them down. Particularly your negative emotions. Do not write them off as "erroneous." Do not self-help your way out of them. Embrace your fear. Embrace your anger. Embrace your sadness. That confrontation *is* God in your life. It is the be-er in you, trying to fuse with the doer. It is a crisis, a turning point. It is your essence moving into existence. The word *emotion* comes from the roots for "move" and "out." We are moving out into life on our emotions. We are being, as we say, born again. We don't believe that, of course, because we are rationalists. But that's all right. We are being taught by our inner selves how to be. All we have to do is be. That *is* God. "This is not your own doing," wrote an incredulous first-century Christian. "It is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Your heart is also getting in touch with your head when you dream. It is the ultimate in passive action. God is in the passive acts. We have nothing to do with our dreams. Just as we have little to do with our emotions. They happen in spite of ourselves. Everyone dreams. It is one of those scientific facts the Baconian method has recovered for us. Yet most of us are completely out of touch with the unconscious as it tries to fuse with the conscious in our nightly confrontation. One-third of our lives is lost. Eight hours out of every twenty-four. The Bible is full of dreams. Without his dream Jacob's name would never have been changed to Israel thirty-four centuries ago (Genesis 32:28). Without his dream Joseph would have been killed by Herod. God *is* in our dreams.

Your heart is also getting in touch with your head when you join a church. You find yourself praying. Bible reading and prayer are passive actions. Left to our own devices most of us wouldn't be praying. We wouldn't be reading the symbols and parables. That is the point. We are not left to our own devices. That *is* God in our lives.

God *is* the heart fusing with the head. God *is* the inner fusing with the outer. God *is* the be-er moving into the crowded city of your head where all the cheering is going on for you and your glorious achievements.

#### Footnotes

1. J. Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Scribner, 1937), p. 675.

2. J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 237.
3. Hastings, *loc. cit.*
4. Cirlot, *loc. cit.*
5. W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), vol. 2, p. 266.
6. V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, (London: Macmillan, 1957), p. 457. V. 2 Kings 9:13.
7. W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), p. 277.
8. W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), vol. 2, p. 264.
9. *Idem.*
10. V. Taylor, *loc. cit.*
11. F. Thilly and L. Wood, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Holt, 1951), p. 315.



# THE CRISIS TESTS

IF THEN, we have an inner and an outer life, and if the key to wholeness is to keep the two together, to recognize that they *are being kept* together, then it follows that the one thing to be avoided is the split. What happens in a temptation, however, is that we are lured to one of the two poles. Either we give up being for doing, or we give up doing for being. In either event, we are split. We are not whole. We do not experience the "love, joy, peace" (Galatians 5:22) of the gospel, the "mobilization" of Dyer, the "self-actualization" of Maslow, the "OKness" of Harris.

We call these times of potential polarization in our lives crises. The word *crisis*, as we have seen, comes from the root for "turning point." In a crisis we are at a turning point, where we are given the opportunity to decide for wholeness or tempted to decide for split-ness. Indeed, the word *crisis* comes from a still deeper root, namely, "decide."

It is, of course, highly problematic which way we will decide in a crisis. And that is what makes the crisis intriguing—at least in retrospect. In prospect a crisis is frightening. So we do everything we can to avoid a crisis. But that is impossible. The crisis is given to us to "test" us, which is what the word *temptation* means at its root.

## I

The crisis appears to be necessary to our growth from achieving to superachieving. As we test the steel, so we test the character. "There is no birth of consciousness," wrote the psychiatrist Jung, "without pain."<sup>1</sup> The temptation to live at one of our two poles is

real. And it is really painful. In the moment of decision I am tempted to work six and sometimes seven days a week for the company, which is to say, for myself, for my advancement, for the satisfaction of my ego, which gets good feelings from achievement. If I make that decision, it can bring pain to my family. And some day, sooner or later, it can bring pain to me. By the same token, in the moment of decision I am tempted to give up on work in the sense of applying myself and instead work on my inner self almost to the exclusion of my outer. And that too can bring pain—to others and to me. Indeed, the deciding itself, whether or not to go to one pole or the other or neither, is a painful process. “The good that I would,” said Paul, “I do not; the evil that I would not that I do . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 3:15, 24, KJV). He had to know the pain before he could know the joy.

Second, the crisis is normal. It is so normal that it even came to Jesus (Matthew 4:1–11). His life was a constant crisis. There were turning points all the time. To be sure, some were larger than others. But they were always there. He was constantly tested by the Pharisees as they questioned him. He was tested by his own friend, Peter, who tried to dissuade him from his wholeness. He was tested at the end in the garden as he tried to decide whether to die. And he was tested on the cross. “My God, my God,” he said, “why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). We are constantly in crisis. Every day has its turning points. Will we decide for being or doing or both?

Third, the crisis is a gift. That may seem contradictory, that we could be given the gift of painful choosing. But consider. Remarkably, the story of Jesus’ temptations begins as follows: “Then Jesus was led up *by the Spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted” (Matthew 4:1). God *is* what tests us. It went all the way back in his tradition, which is to say it goes all the way back in us, to God’s “test,” as the Bible puts it, of Abraham, as he asks him to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:1). If we view our crises as gifts, it can give us a whole new perspective on how to handle pain. A crisis is a painful turning point for achievers in becoming who they are.

Fourth, the crisis is an opportunity for the angelic and satanic in each of us. We are vulnerable as we decide. We are open. We are bewildered. It comes from the word *wilderness*. Jesus was in

the wilderness when he was tempted. It could have gone either way. He was wrestling with the satanic forces within him which were doing their best to split his inner from his outer life. It went all the way back in his tradition, which is to say it goes all the way back in us, to the paradigm of Jacob wrestling with the angel on the banks of the river Jabbok (Genesis 32:22-32). It is the angel in us that makes for wholeness. It is the devil in us that works for the split.

Fifth, what makes the crisis a temptation is that the pull of the devil is often, at least initially, felt more strongly than the pull of the angel. That is why, for instance, in the story of the temptation of Jesus, there are ten verses about the devil and only one about the angels. The pull of the split is stronger than the pull of the whole, at least initially, for achievers. In order to make sense of those pulls, we personify them. We call them devil and angel, just the way, in order to make sense of God, we personify "him." It goes all the way back. It is something deep within each of us.

Ironically, the word *devil* comes from the same root as the words "symbol" and "parable." It comes from the roots for "throw" and "across." In my crisis, whatever is thrown across my path as I try to merge my inner and my outer self is diabolical. Whatever prevents my recognizing that my crises are fusing me is diabolical. It is the wedge that is constantly in my way as I try to be that "one person" the early Christian writer to the Ephesians was talking about (2:15).<sup>2</sup> The devil is whatever it is in me that is constantly vitiating the symbols and the parables. It is the thing in me that prevents my being bound back to who I am, a whole person. Or, if you prefer, a "self-actualized," "mobilized," "OK" person. It is the thing that prevents my religion. It is whatever it is that is thrown across the path of my pilgrimage and so prevents my being thrown "together with" and "beside" my angels. In a word, the devil is whatever it is in me that makes me do rather than be, or be rather than do. If I work seven days a week and pay no attention to my inner life, that is diabolical. If I pay attention solely to my inner life, which is rare but can happen, and have little or no time for work, that too is diabolical.

So, in the sixth place, the crisis becomes another opportunity for hypocrisy. We are all hypocrites at one time or another. It wasn't just a matter for the Pharisees. There is, as we have seen,

the Pharisee in us. As hypocrites we say we are whole when we are split. We are out there seven days a week for the company and are fooling ourselves that we are living a whole life. And that is a real temptation for achievers. It is, as we have seen, the temptation of hypocrisy—to live the split and not the whole and to confuse the split with the whole. It is the temptation to feed the outer and starve the inner—or vice versa. The hypocrite “played a part” on the Greek stage. He “separated gradually.” The word comes from the same root as the word “crisis.” The hypocrite decides to play the part of wholeness on the stage of life when in reality he or she is separating gradually (or quickly) from wholeness. Or, and this is a choice irony, we play the part of being split when in reality we are whole.

## II

The temptation for Jesus was the same as it is for all of us—to be a hypocrite, to live the split and not the whole. The devil was attempting to split him from his wholeness. The devil *is* what attempts to split us from our wholeness. What happens in the second half of life—or, hopefully, earlier—is that we recognize we are split and take steps to be bound back to our original wholeness. Jesus’ temptation, as it is for most of us, was to give up his being for his doing, to gravitate to the one pole of spectacular achievement, to live a half life and pass it off for whole.

First, there was the temptation to materialism, which is, of course, outer living par excellence. My being is wrapped up in my doing, in the symbols of my doing, in my possessions, in my “bread,” as we say. Jesus was tempted in his crisis to swing from inner to outer living. He was tempted to turn the stones into bread, to satisfy his material, as opposed to his spiritual, hunger. He resisted the temptation. In the Bible’s metaphor, he was obedient. It was the ultimate virtue for a slave. “In every respect tempted,” says the Hebrew writer, “as we are, yet without sinning” (4:15). He refused to swing to one of his two poles, to be separated.

Next, there was the temptation to individualism, to put God to the test, which meant for the outer to challenge the inner, to put his physical existence in danger to see if he would be rescued by his spiritual essence. This is the temptation that besets all of us to



live on the outside and then challenge the inside to keep us from falling apart. Jesus resisted the temptation.

Finally, there was the temptation to imperialism, to power, to ruling the kingdoms of the world. It was the biggest temptation of all because it was the messianic one, and it was symbolized by his being taken to a "very high mountain" (Matthew 4:8). The mountain symbolizes the temptation we all have to inflate the achievements of the ego, to think we are what we do, and to think we are very little until we have done very much. It was the mountain of ultimate achievement. All his reforms could be instituted. There would be no more poverty. There would be no more hunger. There would be no more war. It was Israel's oldest dream. "All these I will give you," the devil said, "if you will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9).

There is nothing wrong with achievement as such. But there is plenty wrong with achievement if it is achieved at the expense of the inner life. And that was the bargain the devil was trying to make. The story does *not* say, Do not achieve. It *does* say, Do not achieve if it means giving up your inner life. Because that is your tryst with Satan. That is your Faustian hypocrisy.

### III

How, then, to handle the crisis? How to resist temptation when it comes? Jesus did these things. One, he replied each time to his temptation from the word of God. This does not mean, Don't do your own thinking. What it does mean is that a lot of good thinking has already been done. "The Bible," I heard a psychiatrist say, "is the best source book there is for rational living." She was so right. It has all happened before. It will all happen again. Whatever crisis I am in has an immediate analogue in the Bible. Take the scripture and let it burn into you. Simplistic? Too easy for achievers? I'm not so sure.

There is a reason for Jesus' using the scripture. It is that the basic truths of the inner life can bind us back to ourselves in the time of our crises. The Bible is, for us, the source book of the inner life. The last thing we want in a crisis is more mountain-top can-do thinking.<sup>3</sup> The *point* of the crisis is to throw us *off* that kind of self-help thinking. That is why the crisis is a gift, grace. The idea

that we can solve all our own problems is precisely the kind of egotistical thinking that can do us in in our crises. It is exactly the kind of materialism, individualism, and imperialism we are trying to *avoid*. In my crisis, I want to be bound back to the deep truths in my inner life that find me, not the surface truths of my outer life that I have found. What is your favorite Bible story? That is your symbol or parable to beat your devil. That is what you think your way through to at the time of your crisis. Correction: That is what comes to you. If you do not have such a story, or if you have one that does not fit a particular crisis, then go back to the Bible. "He answered, 'It is written . . . . It is written . . . . It is written' " (Matthew 4:6-10).

Two, Jesus confessed. He was honest about his temptation. There is no other way we could know he was tempted.<sup>4</sup> He must have told his disciples, and they must have passed it on. It is the same thing we have seen in terms of how Jesus emptied himself. He was not afraid to be vulnerable. He was not afraid to show weakness. Indeed, it is exactly the weakness that was his strength, the "erroneous zone" that was not erroneous. Talk about power. This self-emptying *was* his power. "He humbled himself," Paul wrote. "*Therefore* God has . . . exalted him" (Philippians 2:8-9). He did not try to bootstrap his way out of humility. He did not try to self-help his way out of temptation. He lived into it, as the seagull turns into the gale. He embraced it. Because he knew it was his opposite, his God, embracing *him*.

Three, Jesus had twelve people with whom he shared his temptations. Indeed, he no sooner comes out of the wilderness than he calls the disciples. "You," he said later, "are those who stood with me in my temptations" (Luke 22:28). He had to have other people to keep him bound back to who he was. The super-achiever has to have that small group. It is critical to wholeness. We can't achieve wholeness alone with our self-help books under a tree. We need the church.

So often we say, "I couldn't share that." Or we say, "I'll be in a small group but not if it gets too deep." That is the point of the integrated life—that we get in small groups and that we help them get deep by being honest about ourselves and our temptations to hypocrisy. If it was good enough for Jesus, surely it is good enough for us. The church are the people who share their crises and hypoc-

risies. *Crisis* and *hypocrisy* come from the same root, "separate." In a crisis we are tempted to be separated from who we are. As hypocrites, we succumb to the temptation. If you are not sharing such separations in your church, then your church is not yet a church.

Four, Jesus knew that, no matter how difficult his temptation, no temptation would be too great. This did not mean his temptations were not real. It only meant that the force that was binding him back to who he was, was more real. We are never tempted, Paul said, beyond our strength. Indeed, he put it in terms of the ontic power that was binding us back, even in crisis, especially in crisis, to who we were, to himself. "God is faithful," he wrote, "and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength" (1 Corinthians 10:13). God is what helps us when we are helpless.

For all superachievers, Jesus is the proof that that power wins. That is why what we call "a close personal relationship to Christ" is so critical. It means that his story is our story. His paradigm ours. His temptations our temptations. His power to be whole our power to be whole. "Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him" (Matthew 4:11). The path was now clear for the symbols and parables to do their work.

#### Footnotes

1. C. G. Jung, *Collected Works* (New York: Bollingen, 1954), vol. 17, p. 193.
2. "The work of the adversary always implies an attempt on the part of the *diabolos* to separate God and man," W. Foerster in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), vol. 2, p. 73.
3. V. E. F. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (New York: Putnam, 1972), p. 149.
4. G. Buttrick in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1951), vol. 7, p. 270.
5. A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (New York: St. Martin's, 1955), p. 37.

# 12

## THE OPPOSITE TRANSFIGURES

JESUS WENT TO THE MOUNTAIN to ask the question we all ask, Who am I? He had just told his best friend that "he must go to Jerusalem and suffer" (Matthew 16:21), and his best friend had opposed him. He went to the mountain for confirmation. He had just told his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). He went to the mountain for, among other things, confirmation that this was, indeed, the way to be whole.

In the transfiguration Jesus was confirmed in his transformation from God into slave. "This *is* my beloved Son," the voice said (Matthew 17:5), the one who has chosen the way of suffering as the way of atonement, of at-one-ment. As they came down the mountain, Jesus said to them, "So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands" (Matthew 17:12). The way for him to be at one, to be whole, was to embrace his opposite. Indeed, the transfiguration did not occur *until* he embraced his opposite. When achievers embrace their opposite, that is when they too can be transfigured. "You sure look different," we say to a friend. It is because he or she is at one. They have embraced their opposite. Correction: They have been embraced by their opposite. Form and substance, Aristotle called it long before Jesus, the two irreducible principles of being.<sup>1</sup> Light and dark, said Parmenides, long before Aristotle.<sup>2</sup>

Paul explains it best. "Christ Jesus . . . though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be

grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). He emptied himself. It was the Greek word *kenosis*. He emptied himself of divinity in order to take on humanity. The lowest form of humanity was the slave. The highest form of humanity was "equality with God." He married his opposite. He was at one. It was his at-one-ment that gave him his power.

Once he was at one, then he could be transfigured. Then he could begin his suffering, his "self-emptying." The reason he called Peter "Satan" (Matthew 16:23) only six days before (Matthew 17:11), was that Peter was in his way. He was the rock across his path. He was trying to prevent the union of his opposites. Satan, we have seen, is whatever it is that prevents superachievers from being embraced by their opposite. God is the force binding us back in the religious process to who we are, to wholeness, to oneness, to union with our opposite within. Jesus' temptation was to be a non-suffering servant. His transfiguration occurred when he decided "that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things . . . and be killed" (Matthew 16:21). It was a crisis, a helplessness, a turning point. He would be the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, the slave all the way. It was the precise opposite of what one would expect from such an achiever. The way of religion is the way of opposition. Opposition is one way we are bound back to wholeness.

## I

Now this is quite a statement, that superachievers are transfigured when they marry their opposites. Let's see how it plays itself out. In the first place, it meant that Jesus, as we have said, gave up being for doing. His inner married his outer. The god became the slave. The eternal became temporal. They were at one. The "form of God" took on the "form of a slave." It was a metamorphosis, a change in form. And it was the union of these two opposites within him that led him to his transfiguration, where the change in form within was matched by the change in form without. It went all the way back to Homer in the eighth century. B.C., that the form of the god could change.<sup>3</sup>

Our *kenosis*, as we have seen, is just the opposite. It is to give up doing for being, or at least deplete doing sufficiently so that being can catch up. The church is the place where we learn to be. How delightful it would be to give up much of our doing in churches. People join churches and we sign them up for all sorts of "doing" things. But I am rapidly reaching the conclusion that we are signing them up for the wrong things. What most people need is not more things to do but more chances to be. We should be signing ourselves up for more opportunities to get back in touch with our inner selves. The last thing in the world a busy homemaker or business person or laborer needs when he or she joins a church is more activity. We need more passivity and things being done through us rather than by us. That is why there are so few transfigured people in churches. "Christians are all right," Nietzsche said. "The only trouble is they should look more re-deemed." The people who "do" in churches should be the people whose being is in good shape, because they need the doing to round out their being. All the rest of us should be in there working on our being and not hiding from it in our doing.

Just before the transfiguration Jesus said to his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). It meant we should empty ourselves of outer living sufficiently for inner living to catch up. And that is a cross because it means giving up what we are good at but which is amorphous for something we are not good at but which is metamorphic. And that is a risky business. But it is a necessary business if achievers want to be whole. If they want to be at one. If they want to be transfigured. As we recall, the idea was to be as wise about inner as outer living, which means that time given to the inner life will necessarily deplete time given to the outer.

## II

In the second place, the union of opposites means pain. The reason the cross works as a symbol, throwing us with our opposite, is that it is true to life. There is no growth without pain. We do not go from doing to being without pain, just as Christ did not go from being to doing without pain. The final self-emptying was on the cross. There has to be a crucifixion as achievers move

toward oneness. The very fact that I take time away from my doing for being is itself a modest crucifixion. When I empty my datebook of doing and fill it with being at certain times during my day, it is painful. I left a church family one night around 8:00 P.M. and as I left I said, "There just aren't enough hours in the day, are there? I'm looking around for a new datebook." "Hey," the woman called after me, "we don't want you to do that. We pay you to free us from that."

More important is the pain that comes to us which we do not choose but which chooses us. That is our opposite coming to us. Yes, there is joy. The religious process is not only painful. But the joy is after the pain, just as the joy of the child is even greater after the birth of the child. The Christian religion is realistic. That is why it has stuck. And the realism is that as I experience negative emotion, that *is* my opposite moving toward me. The word *emotion* comes from the root for "move." It is my opposite trying to be born. It is my being trying to marry my doing. Positive emotion then confirms the movement in the love, joy, peace of a transfiguration.

What is the part of you, achiever, that gives you the hardest time? Get off your head and onto your heart. Get in touch with that. Feel it. Go to your root emotions. What makes you angry? What makes you sad? Above all, perhaps, what makes you afraid? "They were exceedingly afraid," Mark says of the disciples at the transfiguration (9:6). It went all the way back. One inscription long before Jesus placed fear just after Zeus and before all the other gods.<sup>4</sup> It was always used, we are told by an expert, to describe "a reaction to man's encounter with force."<sup>5</sup> Fear is the force that is trying to marry our opposites. Indeed, writes our expert, fear is "closely bound up with the understanding of one's own existence. It . . . offers access to religious self-understanding."<sup>6</sup>

Very few self-help books talk about fear. Whenever negative emotions are discussed they are described, as in the case of Dyer, as something we choose. Nothing could be more "erroneous." We do not choose such emotions. They choose us. They are our opposite in search of us. They are the rest of us coming into life. In religious language, they are the "new creation" being born. They begin our rebirth. In psychological language, nega-

tive emotions are forces over which we have no control—who would “choose” fear?—and which are integrating our personalities. They are binding us back to who we are. They are making us whole.

What are you afraid of? That *is* your being trying to break through to your doing. That *is* God in your life. Where has the fear of God gone? It has been replaced by the love of God, which is fine, but how can we know the love until we have known the fear? How can we love ourselves until we have been afraid of ourselves? How can we be at one until the self we feel good about is at one with the self we're scared to death of? And how can we be honest, how can we be real, how can we even begin to be whole, until we admit that the fear is there, and that the fear from the inside is *as* there as the success on the outside? Fear *is* the inner self trying to marry the outer. What are you afraid of? Embrace it as a gift. What makes you angry? Embrace it. What makes you sad? Embrace it. “We all . . . *are being* changed,” wrote an incredulous Paul, “. . . from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Out of the pain the glory. The transfiguration. The passage from achieving to superachieving.

### III

In the third place, the union of opposites is taking place within us, and it is taking place all the time. “We all,” wrote that stunned first-century realist, “. . . *are being* changed.” That is how powerful the self-emptying symbol of Jesus was. The reason the story of Jesus sticks is that it is a type of our story. In the type is the power. And in the power is the new life, the wholeness, the at-one-ment, symbolized in the transfiguration. “I live,” Paul said, “yet *not I but Christ lives in me*” (Galatians 2:20). It was the ultimate movement from doing to being. It was the marriage, the oneness, he had been looking for all his life. He was married to Christ. He was at one with his inner self.

How? By accepting your opposite. Paul was a consummate achiever. He went everywhere in his job. He was ruthless with everyone who got in his way. He was on his way to the zenith of achievement. Then, in a frightening experience where he even went blind, his being broke through to his doing. “This (change) comes



from the Lord," he said (2 Corinthians 3:18). It was the passive action of the "Spirit." "My little children," he wrote, "with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). Your being is being born into your doing. That *is* Christ in your life. You are being "born again" (John 3:7). Your opposite is breaking through to you, in your negative emotions, and transfiguring you. It is the power of negative thinking. And it is so powerful that, just as in your own birth, *you* have nothing to do with it. You are being born again.

#### IV

If only it could be permanent, and that is a fourth thing to be said about the transfiguration. Peter wanted to make it permanent by setting up booths and holding the moment. But it was not to be. The union of opposites is a constant process. The god in us is always doing battle with the prince. We want the being to marry the doing. And it does, in the moment. The transfigurations do happen. "Hey," we say, "you really look great. You really are 'on top'." We use the mountain metaphors and the metaphors for face. But we cannot hold the moment. The religious process of binding our being back to our doing is never over. The most we can hope for is momentary crystallizations. But they are a lot to hope for. A lot to live for. Think of the one face in your life that glows more than any other. That is the face whose owner's being married his or her doing more than any other's. That person *is* Christ in your life. That is not all Christ is, but Christ is at least that. How can we possibly love Christ whom we have not seen, if we do not love him or her whom we have seen?

Again the realism of Christianity is evident. Peter may have wanted to make the temporal eternal in order to put off the doing that he now knew was inevitable. In other words, now that he had had his moment with being, he wanted to make it permanent so he would not have to move back to his doing. But the religious process would not let him. He was bound back to his doing just at the moment when he had been bound back to his being. He *had* to go down the mountain and come back to activity. That is the only way passivity can break through. We can only know being through doing, and we can only know doing

through being. It is the old Heraclitean flux. You cannot stop the river. You cannot stop the religious process. You can be transfigured by it, but you cannot stop it. Superachievers cannot hold their transfigurations.

## V

Which leads to a fifth thing to be said. Our transfigurations may not be timeless, but they are timely. The timing always has to be right for the moment when, as we say, we "see the light." In Jesus' case, the transfiguration did not occur until well into his doing time. There had been adumbrations before, as in the temptations, but the actual moment did not occur until there had been many binding moments of inner and outer, of being and doing. It was the same with Paul on the Damascus Road. The same with Moses at the burning bush. The same with Jacob at the Jabbok River. The timing always has to be right for a transfiguration. That is why, just as you can't stop the river, so you can't, in the cliché, push the river. The timing is in God's hands. But it will come. "Still the vision awaits its time . . . . If it seem slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay" (Habakkuk 2:3).

If, then, achiever, you are sad that your transfiguration has not occurred, embrace your sadness. If you are angry that you have not been transformed, embrace your anger. And if you are afraid that your being will never marry your doing, embrace your fear. For it is your sadness that is bringing you joy. It is your anger that is bringing you peace. It is your fear that is bringing you love.

## VI

Sixth, Jesus was not alone. So often we think that to have a mountain-top experience we have to be in the depths of solitude. Moses and Elijah were "with" him. They were there to confirm him in his decision to go the route of the slave. The one was the greatest law giver and the other the greatest prophet. He was bound back to the dominant glowing figures from his past. Whose are the faces that glow for you when your being catches up to your doing? Mother? Father? Grandparent? Teacher? Jesus?

He also had his three closest friends with him. They would be

with him in the garden, too, when the end was in sight. There it is again, the small group. They were the church up there on that mountain. They were "calling out," which is what the Greek word for church meant, each other's being. Your brother or sister in Christ is the one who, when you are hurting, says to you, "Your hurt is healing you. It is making you whole. It is your being embracing your doing. It is your soul in touch with you."

#### Footnotes

1. V. J. Behm in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), vol. 4, p. 744.

2. *Idem.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 746.

4. H. Balz in G. Kittel, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 191.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

6. *Idem.*

# 13

## THE FIRE REGENERATES

I DOUBT IF THERE IS an achiever anywhere who would not like to have a "burning bush" experience. So often we say, "I feel I'm religious, all right. But I've never had what you might call a 'burning bush' experience." The fact of the matter is that such an experience is available to all of us. Indeed it may have happened already, or be happening, or could happen.

So often we fasten on the experience rather than on what went on before the experience. And that is a limited way of viewing such experiences. It tends to make them appear miraculous and therefore out of the question. It is one more reason not to take the Bible seriously.

As in all things to do with the Bible, however, the burden of proof is on the achiever, not on the Bible. The Bible will be around long after we are gone. Consequently, what may appear frivolous may well be serious. And such is the case with the burning bush. Moses is a type of the psychological process. He is typical of how God realizes himself through us. He is an example, that is to say, of our being bound back to who we are. He is an example of personal fusion in which the opposites in us are brought together and new life released. It is precisely that process which is going on in each of us, if we only have eyes to see and ears to hear.

### I

In the first place, following the religious path of retrospect, Moses was in exile. He had murdered a man and fled for his

life. He was away from his adopting people, the Egyptians. And he was away from his own people, the Hebrews. We can only infer that he, like most of us who read the self-help books, was far from who he was. Indeed, he called his own son Gershom, which meant "far from home."

Unity begins in division. It was true for Jonah who fled. It was true for Jacob who struggled. It was true for Paul who escaped through persecution. It was true for the prodigal son who left home and squandered his father's money. Separation is a precondition of being. It is a type of the psychological process. It is the way religion works. It is the way I am bound back to myself. First the fission, as we have seen, then the fusion. First my being lost to who I am, then my being found. The reason the Bible lasts, is that it tells us who we are. It is a series of case studies in us. Its stories are our histories.

What is the most critical experience of alienation in your life as an achiever? It seems implausible that wholeness would begin in such negativism, but that is what the Bible is saying. We have lost that power of negative thinking. Which is to say, we have lost touch with reality. We want the burning bush, but we don't want the exile. We want the integration, but we don't want the alienation. We want the fusion, but not the fission.

The only way to approach the holy ground of fusion is through the pain of fission. Only as I am split from who I am, can I begin to become what I was meant to be. Only as I am two can I begin to become one. Only as I am at odds with myself can I begin to be myself. It goes all the way back to the first story, where Adam and Eve were split from who they were, left their home, became exiles. And it comes all the way up to the last story, where Jesus begins his life in flight as his parents take him to the same Egypt from which Moses was fleeing, and continues through his temptations where the same Satan that was at work in Adam and Eve tries to split Jesus from his original wholeness. And it continues through his taking the form of a slave, the epitome of alienation to achievers, so that he could live out the split with us, even to the cross, the epitome of projected alienation.

What is the greatest feeling of alienation you are experiencing? That *is* God being realized in you. That *is* your outer being bound back to your inner self. Are you fleeing someone, as

Moses? Are you persecuting someone and projecting your alienation, as Paul? Are you running from something you don't want to do, as Jonah? Are you struggling with something that you did do that you don't like yourself for doing, as Jacob? It is your first step toward holy ground. Correction: It is holy ground's first step toward you.

## II

In the second place, Moses was on the job. Again, it confounds our expectations. We would expect that a so-called peak experience, to use Maslow's expression, would happen in a church or in prayer or at the height of ecstasy. But the fact of the matter is that the unusual breaks through in the usual. Moses was a shepherd and all he was doing was going about his business. That tells us something. Particularly when we realize that it was the same for David, Saul, Paul, Mary, Joseph. They were all simply going about their business when the bush burned.

What this tells us is that, while the major job for achievers in church and country is to redeem being from doing, it is not to redeem being from doing at the expense of doing. We are not to give up doing in order to be, except insofar as concentrating on the one to right the balance necessarily depletes the other. It is not either-or, as we saw in the transfiguration. Like so much of life, it is both-and. The whole person is the one who both is and does. Our problem, as we have seen, is that we go to extremes. We lose our balance. We have all-or-nothing personalities. When we get into doing we want to give up on being. And when we get into being we want to give up on doing. Nothing could be further from what is needed.

Why? Because the balance is more productive. It is better doing. It works better. Which would you prefer, Moses as shepherd or Moses as leader of Israel? He did not give up his doing. But once his being had caught up with his doing, his doing changed dramatically. It was better doing. When we do what we are we accomplish more than when we are what we do. That is the point of the popular management book, *The Gamesman*, cited earlier. We manage better if we get in touch with the heart as well as the head on the job. We are more productive if we do. Who we are affects profoundly what we do.

This does not mean, I repeat, to give up our doing, in church or job or anywhere else. We are to take on being. It could not mean to give up doing, because that is when being found Moses. The fact that the bush burned when he did his job releases us from thinking religion is only for those who do not have jobs or who have jobs as hermits, monks, clergy, or any other form of so-called religious person.

### III

In the third place, Moses was alone. Again, it is typical of the religious process. Jacob was alone on the banks of the river Jabbok. Jonah was alone when he decided to flee. Jesus was alone on the mountain. Elijah was alone when he heard the "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12).

If I am honest with myself, I see numerous times when I am in flight from aloneness. Sometimes I am working at my desk, and I am hoping the telephone will ring. Sometimes I find myself in a group when I am grouped out, and I know I could be spending the time more productively alone. Sometimes I find myself running to a group exactly because I don't want to be alone. I find myself seeking out someone just because I don't want to seek out myself.

Again, this is not to say, Give up your togetherness. As we have seen, the small group of disciples is essential for wholeness. It is to say, Take on your aloneness. I cannot think of one major personality in the Bible who was not alone as well as together. This does not mean to give up on groups. It means to add being alone with yourself.

I wish I had more equipment for being alone on my job when I feel alienated. Sometimes I find myself kneeling. But more often the first thing I think of is, Who can I share my alienation with? This is not to say, Don't share your alienation. No doubt Moses did with Zipporah, his wife, "Little Bird," all the time. The Bible stories do not say, Don't share your alienation. As we have seen, we would not even know that Jesus was tempted if he had not shared that experience of alienation with his disciples. Indeed, he modelled sharing. But he also modelled solitude. Don't give up sharing. Take on solitude. Indeed, let your sharing move you to solitude, as you let your doing move you to being,

and your separation to integration. In Gibran's famous line, "Let there be spaces in your togetherness."

#### IV

In the fourth place, when the creative encounter came, Moses resisted. Alienation, vocation, and isolation were not enough to enable being to break through to doing. There had to be confrontation, just as Jesus had to confront the achiever by riding into Jerusalem. It is typical of the psychological process. The only way achievers are ever going to be bound back to who they are is through confrontation. It is just too good out there with all the doing.

The way we resist being is to say that we couldn't possibly do what being is trying to get us to do. We play down our doing in order not to be taken in by being. We turn the whole thing around and say we can't do what we know we can. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" Moses asked. "Send somebody else" (Exodus 4:13).

It was irrelevant. All his objections were beside the point. Of course he couldn't do it. Of course he had never done it before. Of course he had never led anybody anywhere in his life. That was *proof* that it was the passive moving on the active. It was being moving on doing. Of course I can't "get myself together." Nobody ever said I could. Whenever I do it isn't me. I can never get beyond that 49 percent, if that. "The good that I would I do not" (Romans 7:19). That's me. That's life. That's realistic. It is the height of romantic nineteenth-century frontier idealism to think I can bootstrap my own "OK"-ness. Of course I can't deal with my alienation. If I could I would have done it long ago. I need some alone time on my job to remind me of alienation. But I'm always reaching for the telephone. So when I *am* alone and realize that I *am* split from who I am, that has to be God, it can't be me, because *I* won't *do* it. And when something in me reminds me *to* do it I remind that inner voice that I *can't* do it. Which proves that it can't be me because I have said that *I* can't do it. That bush is really burning now.

And only now is when the word *God* appears. If it isn't me it has to be something else. And for the first time in all my alienation, vocation, and isolation I feel that maybe I am struggling,



as Moses and Jacob and Jesus and Paul before me, with being coming into life. Indeed, Moses' own name came from the root "to be born."<sup>1</sup> His being was being born from his doing. He was becoming himself. He was becoming named in the religious process. He was becoming Moses. He was becoming at last what he was meant to be—himself, a whole person.

It was in this process that the name *God* began to reveal itself. As I go back and forth in my confrontation, which springs from my alienation, vocation, and isolation, the name *God* comes into being (Exodus 3:14). Indeed, the very name for *God* itself came from the root for "be." Being was coming into life. Essence was coming into existence. The ideal was becoming real. Fusion was succeeding fission. Fire is the symbol *par excellence* of regeneration. It was fire at Pentecost, fire in the haloes of the saints, fire that led the Israelites out of Egypt. He was being regenerated. He was being born again. Being was generating life.

The name for *God* meant "I cause to be what comes into existence."<sup>2</sup> I am the creator. I *am* whatever it is in you that enables your being to be born from your doing. I *am* whatever it is in you that enables your oneness to be born from your twoness. I am bringing you yourself. I am binding you back to who you are. I am naming you even as I name myself to you. "Moses, Moses!" (Exodus 3:4).

#### Footnotes

1. R. F. Johnson in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), vol. 3, p. 443.

2. B. W. Anderson in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* vol. 2, p. 410.

# 14

## THE DARKNESS ENLIGHTENS

JUST AS A TYPE of the psychological experience of wholeness in the Old Testament is the burning bush, so a type of the same experience in the New Testament is the Damascus Road (Acts 9). Both events last because both events are going on in us. Both events happened in the lives of superachievers. Their stories are our histories. Either they have happened or they could happen or they will happen. They are a part of the phenomenology of psychological experience. They show us how we can be bound back to who we are. Consequently, we want to examine the facts, the evidence. We want to employ the empirical method. It works in science and it works in religion.

### I

In the first place, Paul was a legalist. He was a Pharisee, and that meant he ran his life by the 613 rules of the game. The Pharisees had a rule for everything from how to eat to how to relate to how to experience God. One of their rules was that they were not to look at women in the streets. Consequently, the scholar William Barclay reports, you had a lot of Pharisees running into walls.

That, of course, is to be facetious about something about which they were serious. There is the type of personality that wants everything laid out. It wants everything planned. The way to achieve is to play by the rules. It is to work out your five-year, three-year, one-year, and month-by-month plans. And that is fine, as far as it goes. But there is more to life than planned experience.

Jesus, on the other hand, represented everything Paul was not. Jesus was antinomian to Paul, "against the law." Jesus was free, unbound, spontaneous. His behavior was a threat to Paul. "Of the tribe of Benjamin," Paul described himself, "a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee . . . as to righteousness under the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:5-6). And here was Jesus going around breaking the law. He was upsetting their plans. And that is the cardinal sin for the legalist personality. Just put in a call to your achieving spouse at the office at 5:00 P.M. and say that dinner won't be ready till 9:00 P.M. and see what happens. Or put in a call to the achiever at home and say you've been caught at the office and the dinner planned for 6:00 P.M. will have to wait till 8:00 P.M.

The psychological experience of wholeness, as we have seen, begins in the union of opposites. As I think back, remembering with Paul that religion is in retrospect, and as I am honest with myself, as Paul was, telling about his religious experience, I realize what a gift my friends give me who are spontaneous. They give me a lost part of myself. They unite me with who I feel I am not in order for me to be bound back to who I am. And that is what Jesus did for Paul. Your religion is coming to you in your opposite. As the legalist opens, he or she begins to be whole. As the openist plans, he or she begins to be whole. The word *salvation*, we remember, comes from the root for "whole."

## II

In the second place, Paul was an activist. He was the epitome of activity. Most superachievers are. He worked day and night. He had been educated at the world-famous university of Tarsus.<sup>1</sup> He spoke Greek as well as Hebrew. He was an orthodox Hellenist Jew. He was a pure Israelite and proud of it—"a Hebrew born of Hebrews." He was only thirty years old in this year of A.D. 32.<sup>2</sup> And he was sedulous in his pursuit of the Golden Grail of success. When we meet him on the Damascus Road he is on a seven-day, 140-mile journey on foot for his firm.<sup>3</sup> That's a lot of dedication to your career.

There is nothing wrong with activity, of course. The activist is just playing out who he or she is, just as the legalist is playing out who he or she is. What the phenomenology of the psychological experience is telling us is that if you are an activist your *god* is go-

ing to come to you not in the activity but in passivity, just as if you are a legalist your *god* is going to come to you in openness. God is the fusion of the passive with the active and the open with the legal. That fusion is what happened to Paul. It is what happened to Moses. It is what happened to Jesus. It is a type of the religious experience which produces psychological wholeness. It is what happens to us *when* we are religious. We are bound back to the rest of who we are. We are given the 51 percent through our negative emotions which are anything but "erroneous."

As we have seen, Jesus emptied himself of his godness for humanness. Paul *was* emptied of his activity for passivity. Moses *was* emptied of alienation for integration. Only Jesus could do it. For the others it had to be done. For us it is done. Here's where the doing and the being begin to fit. You don't just experience your being or your inner life or your whole life only when you go into your closet and pray. Certainly that's one way, but it's far from the only way. Paul, the ultimate doer, was born again when he *did* nothing. Paul, the legalist, was born again when he *was* opened. This does not mean, as we have said, to give up your doing. It does not mean to give up your legalism. That is your personality. It means that there will be moments as an achiever when you are emptied of your activism and legalism, when you are passive and open, and it is in those moments that you experience wholeness and God speaks. It is in those moments that, as we say, we "see the light." It was light, the symbol of revelation, that surrounded Paul on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:4). "Christ Jesus . . . made me his own" (Philippians 3:12). It is the ultimate passive statement for an activist.

### III

In the third place as we examine the evidence, something happened to Paul which often happens to planners and doers. He became defensive. After all, when you have 613 ways to do it, it's hard to admit they can all be boiled down to two—love God and love neighbor. When you have the whole thing laid out, when you have the ultimate self-help book with you day and night, when you have your presentation to the Board of Directors ready, it's hard to give up any of the territory which, by heredity and conviction, you have won.

And, as happens with high achievers who have a lot of territory to

defend, because they have mapped it and planned it and won it, Paul took the offensive. He did what we all do when, because of our education and status and personality, we feel there is basically one way to do the job. He projected. He took out on others what he liked least in himself. Jesus became his enemy. "I persecuted this way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women" (Acts 22:4). Instead of being united by his opposite within, he opposed his opposite without.

I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem; I not only shut up many of the saints in prison, by authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities (Acts 26:9-11).

It's easy to confront you. Then I don't have to confront me. It's easy to bind you. Then I don't have to be bound back to me. It's easy to criticize you for the very thing I like least in me. And then when you criticize me, it's easy to become defensive. Jesus' life-style was a criticism of Paul's. Paul became defensive. Then he slipped into the next thing that happens when we are defensive. He became aggressive. The legalist and activist turned into the antagonist. The achiever, who would not be confronted, ended up confronting.

All this is to say that Paul wasn't anything else than who he was. Legalist, activist, antagonist—if that fits your story as an achiever, fine. If not, there are others in the Bible whose stories fit yours better. In either event, the point is that *we don't have to be anything else than who we are* to be bound back to the rest of ourselves. Whatever we are, our opposite is coming to us. The road brightens. God *is* coming to you in what makes you defensive. Jesus, the god who became the slave and so symbolized the fusion of opposites, *is* coming to us, even though we are in opposition. In Paul's case, as in most of ours, through somebody else.

#### IV

And that is a fourth thing to be said as we examine the evidence for wholeness in the life of achievers. Paul had played out his antagonism all the way and held the coats of a mob while

they killed a man. There are few things more opposite than that. The key, then, to his psychological experience of wholeness was to have what was projected out onto Stephen introjected in onto Paul. And over that he had zero control. It was not subject to activism. There was nothing he could do to bring it about. Again, some would argue that we can at least achieve 49 percent of our wholeness. But Paul would not even argue that. He would say zero. It was all done for him, none by him. "It was *not* I, but the grace of God" (1 Corinthians 15:10). That's tough stuff for can-do self-help achievers. But it's realistic stuff for can't-do helpless superachievers. His change would bring itself about, in due time. It was grace. Again, "If (the vision) seem slow," Habakkuk wrote, "wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay" (2:3).

The way grace was working is that, in his acts, he had travelled to the limits of himself. He had reached the ultimate in antagonism, which is to say the ultimate in defensiveness. "And when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by and approving, and keeping the garments of those who killed him" (Acts 22:20). He had gone to the limit of what it meant to be himself. That is *all* he brought to his encounter with the Lord on the Damascus Road. He brought himself, an achiever, in all his terrifying authenticity. That is *all* we have to bring when Jesus rides into our lives. That is why we can speak of the Bible as the book of unconditional love. God loves us *just as we are*, even if we have not read one self-help book. Even if we are at 0 percent, let alone 49 percent. God *is* what accepts us in our incompleteness. God *is* what moves us to wholeness. Our crucifixion is that we give up leading only a half life. Our resurrection is that we are "born again" to live the opposite or other half of life as well. The 51 percent.

"I am Jesus" (Acts 9:5) in Paul's conversion experience meant "I am your opposite." I am the slave embracing the prince. It is the light of consciousness that, as we say, dawns on us. It is God revealing himself. It is our being bursting through our doing. From now on, as Paul wrote in retrospect, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). From now on, my doing springs from my being. I do

what I am. I no longer am what I do. "Rise and enter the city," Jesus said, "and you will be told what you are to *do*" (Acts 9:5-6).

It would never have happened without Stephen. Stephen was the church for Paul. He rode into Paul's life. He did not leave him alone to work out his own salvation. He was "God" at work in him (Philippians 2:13). He provoked the religious encounter. And he did it in a uniquely kenotic or Christ-like way. He allowed Paul to kill him. He was Paul's ultimate projection. Because Stephen knew it was the only way to introjection. "The blood of Stephen thy witness was shed" to get Paul's blood flowing. Stephen was emptying himself, he was *being* emptied, in order that Paul could be filled. It was the way of *kenosis* all over again. It was the religious way to psychological wholeness. Stephen was doing what Jesus had done. Stephen *was* Jesus for Paul. It was the opposite of self-help. Paul could not save himself. He had to be saved by another. The church are the people who empty themselves in love to the uttermost that others might be filled. That others might see the light of God's countenance. That others might be saved. That others might be whole at last.

#### Footnotes

1. G. H. C. Macgregor in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1954), vol. 9, p. 118.
2. W. H. P. Hatch in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, p. 192.
3. W. Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), p. 72.

# 15

## THE FISSION FUSES

IF A CRITICAL PROBLEM before church and country and each of us is the split between being and doing, and if, as we have said, a solution to the problem lies in recognizing the biblical symbols and parables, then the resurrection of Jesus becomes central to the discussion. More accurately, it is central to religion which, as we have seen, is the process of being bound back to who we are. It is that process which fuses the be-er and the doer in us and gives us new life. The resurrection is the symbol *par excellence* of new life.

Like nearly everything in our religion, the resurrection goes all the way back in time, which usually means it goes all the way back in us. Long before Jesus there were gods who died and rose from the dead. Adonis, Tammuz, Osiris, Attis—all were gods of healing and salvation.<sup>1</sup> All died an early death. All have their Good Fridays. All have their Easters. All died with some relation to a tree. Jesus, however, remains, whereas they have gone, and the reason Jesus remains is that his story was mingled with history, what was said about the human condition in symbols was lived out in one human life in blood.

Blood is the place to begin in any discussion of the resurrection because, of course, there would have been no resurrection without the crucifixion. Indeed, it is the ongoing symbol of blood, as we have seen, that Christians are enjoined to remember in their weekly celebrations. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25). Christianity is the religion of suffering. This does not mean it is a religion of masochism. It means that it is a religion of realism. It is realistic about suffering. And



what Christianity says, is that the way superachievers fuse the inner and the outer person, the way they are bound back to themselves in the wholeness process, the way they break through to new life—correction: the way new life breaks through to them—is when they suffer. My being is fused with my doing when I bleed.

# I

Let's look at that a little more closely. In the first place, it means that I would do well to try to accept whatever suffering comes to me as God coming to me. God *is* in my suffering. God used the suffering of the crucifixion to bring the joy of the resurrection. God wills my wholeness, my healing, my salvation. Indeed, God is whatever it is in me that is moving me toward wholeness. But the only way that can happen is through partialness. I know joy when I have known pain. I know love when I have known fear. I know peace when I have known war. The only way to the West Coast for the pioneers was through the Rockies.

Who makes you angrier than anyone else in your life? Who at the office, the job, the home? Who do you have the hardest time forgiving? Who keeps you awake at night? That person is bringing your being into life. New life is coming to you through that person. That person *is* God in your life.

What brings you more nervous tension than anything else in your life? What upsets you so much you can't eat? When you hold your hand out in front of you, does it tremble? That *is* your essence coming into existence. That *is* your religion. You are being bound back to who you are. Your being is trying to fuse with your doing. And you are bleeding in the process. *There is no other process.* And this is hard for achievers because they hate to admit weakness. They hate to admit that they, too, bleed.

But this is why the Christian religion is realistic. It is also why it is motivating. In Christ we see ourselves. We have an example of the person who *was* bound back. He, the ultimate achiever, was so nervous in the garden before his death that his sweat, Luke says, "became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). It was at that moment that God broke through. The tension *was* God breaking through to Jesus. That *is* how God breaks through. Your tension is a gift. It is the gift of grace. It is the gift of new life. It is anything but "erroneous."

It is you. It is the acme of authenticity. You are being "born again" as you bleed.

What brings you pain, mental or physical pain? That *is* joy being born in your life. That *is* your new being being born. "If anyone is in Christ," an astonished Paul wrote, "he is a new being" (2 Corinthians 5:17). He was in constant pain. We will never know what his illness was, but it was serious. "Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you' (my gift). For my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). There it is again. You have to know weakness before you can know power.

We are being fused by our pain. Not divided, which is instinctively what we think pain will do. But fused. We are in fusion not fission. We are not split from ourselves but coming to ourselves. Your pain is bringing you yourself. It is your being coming into existence. It is your passion replicating Christ's passion. It is your crucifixion bringing you to resurrection. You are on your way to new life. You are being "born again" through your pain.

## II

In the second place, none of this makes any sense, of course, when I am in the experience. It is virtually impossible to tell someone in that much pain that that *is* God in his or her life. They'd think you were crazy. They'd throw you out of their hospital room or living room. That is why religion is in retrospect. We are bound back as we look back. To paraphrase Wordsworth again, religion is suffering recollected in tranquillity. You look back after the suffering or later in it and see the god. Jesus came to the disciples after the crucifixion. Paul found his power in weakness after he had lived with his mental and physical pain for years. Fusion is too much for us to catch at the moment. The disciples never could understand Jesus' saying that the messiah was a suffering messiah. Not until after the suffering was over. Not until after the crucifixion. Then they went out with that good news and "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). "When Jesus was glorified," John wrote, "*then* they remembered that this had been written of him" (12:16). He had to suffer before they understood.

We have to suffer before we understand. It is a replication of history. That is why the story lasts: because the symbolic is fused with the historic. What goes on in me is what went on in them. I understand after someone has suffered for me, as Stephen did for Paul. I understand after I, too, have suffered. This is not to glorify suffering. It is to see the glory in the suffering. After the suffering. Or, if the suffering is not over, at another level of the suffering. Paul's illness was not over, but his being had broken through to his doing at a higher, and later, level. The disciples, we can assume, suffered from extreme tension after Jesus' death, but being broke through to them at a higher, and later, level.

Clearly this is the point of the resurrection—that new life is breaking through *all the time*, that being is fusing with doing, and that some time after the suffering or later in the suffering we can see that. It will make itself known. Jesus *will* come through whatever doors we have locked ourselves in in our suffering. "In him we have redemption through his blood," wrote another stunned first Christian (Ephesians 1:7). Essence has moved into existence. The objective has become the subjective. The noumenal phenomenal. Being has come into life. We are bound back as we look back. "In him we *have* redemption." Blood speaks to blood. Death brings life. And we have nothing to do with it. It is happening in spite of us, not because of us. Proof is the pain. We are fighting our own helplessness—when *all along it is the pain of being helpless that is bringing us our opposite*. It is the pain that is healing us, making us whole, saving us.

### III

In the third place, then, it makes all sorts of sense to hook up with as many of these retrospective types as I can. They can only be helpful. I realize that their story is my story because their history is mine. So whenever I hear someone telling his or her story, I am hooked by the correspondences. It is the disciple process all over again. It is the house churches that dotted the Mediterranean shore. The church are the people who share their stories with each other, who look back with each other in order to be bound back. They are the ones who will be with me in my pain. In a house church the members put their arms around each other in their suffering. Or they look back on their pain in the

relative tranquillity of a Sunday morning with their brothers and sisters in Christ. And then they see that pain somehow related to the pain of Jesus. It is his pain that unites him to all our painful "erroneous" zones and makes them the opposite of erroneous, namely, the bearers of the truth of who we are.

It is in this way that the church heals the split between who I am and what I do, who I am and what I achieve. The job of the church is to ride into Jerusalem. It is to provoke the religious encounter. It is to suffer. It is to bleed. It is to die if need be. And in that process, achieve new life. The church is the place where we share our suffering and are astonished at how Jesus relates his suffering to ours.

#### IV

This sharing of suffering is what gives superachievers the power to deal with anything in their outer lives. And that is a fourth thing to be said about the resurrection. As the inner and the outer begin to fuse, you find that you are no longer unhinged by outer disruptions, no matter how big or small. You can even handle your spouse backing into the door of the garage. You can handle a business reverse. You can handle your inability to get even 49 percent of the way to wholeness. You find you can even forgive someone who doesn't want to forgive you. Because you feel you *are* forgiven. Your suffering has brought your being through to your doing and you have "risen" above things which, before, you could not handle. Not always, of course, but often. Often enough to be amazed at how powerful being is. You can fail to "actualize" yourself. You can lose your job. You can plateau at forty. You can lose a loved one. You can be taken to the hospital yourself. You can even handle your own death. "If we have been united with him in a death like his," a retrospective, fused, suffering church member wrote, "we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:5).

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus (the suffering), so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies (the resurrection) (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

Resurrection brings power. The dead parts of achievers are

coming to life. The parts we never knew existed. Or the parts we knew but did not like, or were afraid of, or ashamed of. "The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Even the lost parts of me. Jesus gets the blood flowing again. "I have been crucified with Christ," that early church member wrote in the classic resurrection sentence. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). That was new life. That was wholeness. That was power.

## V

It was also peace, and that is a fifth thing to be said about the resurrection. Even more than power, achievers, deep within, want peace. It is the age-old dream. It is the Hebrew *shalom*, as we remember, from the root for wholeness. It is what messiahs, the ultimate achievers, are all about. Not only peace between but peace within. It could even be argued that we will never get peace between us until we get peace within us. If we can stand the tension of the opposites within us, if each of us can be married by his or her opposite, if we can be fused, that can be the greatest contribution, perhaps, each of us can make toward peace. Even we, as someone has said, can place one small grain on the scales of fate.<sup>2</sup>

The way you embrace your opposite is through suffering. When you suffer it is your opposite trying to embrace you. It is your being embracing your doing. It is Christ who lives in you once again taking up the way of the cross. And once again, as another startled early Christian wrote, "making peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20). It is the lost part of you coming home. It is the dead part of you coming to life. "Peace," Jesus said, as he stood among the disciples after it was all over. "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). Or, as that same retrospective, fused, suffering, powerful church member wrote, "You have been raised with Christ" (Colossians 2:11). The resurrection, superachiever, is yours.

### Footnotes

1. J. S. Sanford, *The Kingdom Within* (New York: Lippincott, 1970), p. 163.
2. B. Hannah, *Jung: His Life and Work* (New York: Putnam, 1976), p. 129.

# 16

## THE SILENCE SPEAKS

MANY ACHIEVERS would give anything to hear God speak. It is not enough to hear themselves or their boss. They want it all. When you strip it down, revelation is at the heart of wholeness, of binding us back to who we are. So often we find ourselves saying, "I'd do that at once if I know it was what God wanted me to do." Or, "If only I knew what God's will really was, I'd do it. If only I could hear God speak, I'd listen."

The Bible is the record of God speaking. And the only way for what was said then to mean something now, the only way for God to *continue* to speak, is to see the correspondences between the listeners then and the listeners now. The only way, in other words, to get the revelation out of the Bible and into the achiever is to see how closely he or she resembles Paul, Moses, Elijah, even Jesus.

Consequently, as we see how God revealed himself to them, we are given "handles" to see how God reveals himself to us. By the same token, as we look at ourselves, we are amazed to find out that what goes on in us went on in them. We only have to be ourselves, in other words, and we are instantly "bound back" to our brothers and sisters in the Bible.

### I

What achiever at one time or another has not lost hope? Even those who have jobs often feel hopeless about ever getting them done as well as they could be done. Even those who have a spouse or children or parents often despair of being good spouses or children or parents. Occasionally an achiever even despairs of life

itself. Or at the very least of the meaning of life. "What does it all add up to?" we ask. Or we despair of our ability to be even 49 percent whole, let alone 100 percent.

Elijah the Tishbite of Tishbe in Gilead had lost hope. The achiever had given it his best effort, and he had been defeated. He had provoked the creative encounter, as Jesus did in Jerusalem, and he, as Jesus, had lost. He had just defeated the 450 prophets of Baal. One man against 450—that's achievement. And now he was fleeing for his life. What he had done had not been understood, and he had been thrown out of the country. He had lost his job. He had lost his family. He had lost his people. And with all that gone, he had lost, almost inevitably, his self-image, his meaning, his purpose, his hope. "O Lord," he said, "take away my life" (1 Kings 19:4).

At that moment "an angel touched him" (1 Kings 19:5). The point of despair is the point of hope. When you hit rock bottom you hit rock. When you are desperate, that is the moment, of all moments, when God can speak. No, not inevitably. Not just because we are low will we be high. Not just because we are at our worst will we be at our best. But possibly. Potentially. Often. God *is* what is coming to us in our hopelessness. God *is* the lost part of myself that is being born in the labor of despair. So what is the "handle?" The handle is to be authentic about my despair. To really live it. To be honest about it. *Not to try to turn it around*, as the self-help books suggest. But to allow myself to be turned around by it. *It is telling me something about me.*

Somewhere along the way achievers got the mistaken notion that they should not live their despair. It isn't "manly." You never show "weakness." You always think "positively." But what the Bible is saying is that it is *precisely* the despair that is the way to God. It is God's way to us. It is the *way* God speaks. If God speaks at all, he is going to speak through my despair, isn't he? If God speaks at all, he is going to speak through my loss of hope, isn't he? "An angel touched him." It was the same as the angels that came to Jesus after his temptations. "And behold, angels came and ministered to him" (Matthew 4:11).

How? Everybody wants an angel. By being in touch with your despair. But I am. Am I? I come in the door at night and take out my despair on my wife. That's not being in touch. How can we be

touched by an angel if we are not in touch with ourselves? We greet at the door and take out our despair about the job and the children and ourselves on each other. That's not being in touch. That's projecting it out beyond myself so I don't *have* to be in touch with it.

The church are the people who share their despair with each other. The church is a laboratory where achievers experiment with that kind of authenticity. The church is the place where we get in touch with who we are. Because that is how God gets in touch with us. That is how God speaks. It is the "still small voice" that comes through the earthquake, wind, and fire of our despair (1 Kings 19:12).

## II

Who of us has not run? It is a second correspondence between achievers now and achievers then. We all have our flight patterns. We stay too long at the office to avoid going home. We stay too long at home to avoid going to the office. We watch TV to avoid homework. We read newspapers to avoid reading books. We look to others in order to avoid looking at ourselves. We look at ourselves in order to avoid looking at others. We go to the garden to avoid going to church. We go to church to avoid going to the garden. All so-called erroneous zones. But the error is *precisely* to think of them as erroneous.

Elijah the Tishbite of Tishbe in Gilead in 860 B.C. was running. He had good reason to. There was a price on his head. He was running for his life. Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, King of Tyre, wife of Ahab, King of Israel, queen, had given him twenty-four hours to get out of the country. He got out. The only trouble was that he kept going. From despair under the broom tree in one day, he continued another forty in flight to the cave in the mountain. "He was afraid, and he arose and went for his life" (1 Kings 19:3).

Flight begins in fear. We run from what we are afraid of. Again we see a superachiever afraid. From whom or what are you running? It is the possibility of God in your life. He had achieved a great victory. They turned on him. He fled. He should have. It was only sensible. But then he kept running. The rejection got to him. He holed up in the cave in the mountain for forty-one days. And it was there that the Word of God found him. Indeed, it is here, at the end of his flight, *precisely in his fear*, that God speaks.



What is the "handle?" It is to be honest about my fear. "He was afraid." He acknowledged his fear. He ran. God *is* at the end of my flight. No, not inevitably. But possibly. Potentially. Often. God *is* what is coming to me in my fear. Don't stop it. Go with it. Listen to it. Learn from it. Do the *opposite* of what the self-help books tell you to do—namely, You chose your fear, now grow up and get over it! Free yourself from this "erroneous zone" by drawing up a "fear list." Again, just the opposite: This is the *authentic* you being born. All you have to do is be present at your own birth! The lost part of you is being born in the labor of fear. Therefore it is critical to be in touch with your fear. You cannot be touched by the angel unless you are in touch with yourself. What are you afraid of? That is your self being born. It is your religion happening. No, it is not the only way. But it is one way. It is the way God speaks. It is the way we hear the still small voice.

We are at a root emotion. God speaks when we are in touch with our roots. God rarely speaks until we are in touch with our roots. How many root emotions are there? Anger is not a root emotion. It is simply a cover for fear. It may even be that despair is not a root emotion and that it too is simply a cover for fear. It may be that fear on the one hand and love on the other are the two root emotions and that the Bible realizes this fact by putting the two together in its root statement, the *Shema Israel*, "Hear, O Israel," in Deuteronomy 6. "That you may fear the Lord your God . . . And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart."

The love of God, we are told by a Bible expert, is never separated from the fear of God.<sup>1</sup> You can never have the one without the other; never the push of superachieving without the pull of fear, the one without its opposite. That is why there have always been hermaphroditic aspects to God in the Bible and other religions. And that is why God speaks—because there are hermaphroditic aspects in us. That is, aspects that are both masculine and feminine, both Hermes and Aphrodite. God is both justice and mercy, both judge and redeemer, both fearful and loving, both he and she.

It is only one gene that makes the difference between whether we are male or female. What happened to all the other genes? They are still there. So if you are an achieving man, the key to your growth, the key to your wholeness, the key to being bound back to who you are, is to get in touch with your opposite, the

woman part of you, the part that is sensitive and deals with feelings and relationships. Is it any wonder that God speaks to the men in the Bible through their emotions? And if you are an achieving woman, the key to your growth, the key to your wholeness, the key to being bound back to who you are, is to get in touch with your opposite, the man part of you, the part that is rational and deals with logical constructs and thoughts. Is it any wonder that God spoke to Deborah in the Bible through her brilliant leadership as a "judge" of Israel?

Talk about a "handle," you can't have much more of a handle than this. As Elijah got in touch with his feelings, as his feelings got in touch with him, God the potential became God the actual. God spoke to him through his feelings, through his desperation and fear. God spoke to me not long ago when a woman said to me, "I pray for you often. The only trouble is I don't know what to pray for. Because while I have shared my feelings with you, you have only rarely shared your feelings with me." Talk about an earthquake. Talk about a still small voice. Talk about someone riding into your life and confronting you to come out of your cave of rationalism. She was right, and I thanked her for the gift she had given me. She *was* grace. And I added, "That's where I need help."

The church are the people who help. The church are the people who encounter each other creatively to nudge the psychological process. Why the church? Because the fear of going into my emotions always takes place within the love of the beloved community. The church is the laboratory where my opposites attract and fuse and the psychological process of wholeness happens. Logos and eros unite. Opposites touch. If you are not touched by what goes on in your church, then it isn't the church. The logical me is at one with the relational me. And when that happens, that is when you hear the "still small voice." The still small voice is what you hear when your Hermes and Aphrodite unite.

### III

What superachiever, of all people, has not done what he or she never dreamed would be possible? That is what happens when being and doing fuse. Elijah found himself spun around 180°. "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9,13). At his most

"erroneous" was when he was hearing God. He was *not alone* in the cave just as he had not been alone under the broom tree. *God was with him all along*. Indeed, it was the despair and fear in his aloneness that were bringing him God. God *was* what came to him in his despair and fear. That *is* when your "still small voice" speaks. Don't try to still the small voice by self-helping your way out of what makes you hopeless and afraid. It is not a matter of "choosing" what makes you hopeless and afraid. Who would choose hopelessness and fear? The self-help fallacy is the Socratic fallacy—that right thinking will lead to right feeling. We do *not* choose our emotions. They choose us. They are *God* choosing us. They are God moving into our lives. Therefore the key to personal growth is *not* to ask, what can I do to overcome this immobilizing emotion? It is rather to ask, *what is this "negative" emotion mobilizing me to do?* What is *God* calling me out to do? It is the difference between the Greek and Hebrew idea of God. For the Greek, God was in thoughts from which you got feelings. For the Hebrew, God was in feelings from which you got thoughts. Since you chose your thoughts and not your feelings, it was easy to choose or not choose God. It was easy to play God. It was easy to "be" God. But when your feelings choose you, it is not so easy to play God. God is choosing you—if you will listen to your "erroneous" emotions. "Faith," Luther said, "is our response to God's grace." The response is all. We can respond to "immobilizing" emotions by trying to self-help our way out of them. Or we can respond by saying they are God's way of bringing us wholeness. Maybe these responses are why the Greek gods died and the Hebrew God lives.

Elijah found himself doing the *opposite* of what he wanted to do. He wanted to stay in the cave where it was safe. Instead he found the still small voice saying, "Go, return" (1 Kings 19:15) where it was not safe. It is one thing to be your opposite. We can talk about that at length. It's quite another to do your opposite. The first work of doing on the other side of being is that you find yourself doing what you never dreamed you would ever be doing. It is the epitome of passive action. It is the epitome of power, of *superachievement*. Far from denigrating doing, the fusion of being and doing results in *more* doing than had ever been done before. You are 100 percent of the way to wholeness, at least for the

moment. Jesus found himself going to Jerusalem. Elijah found himself going to Damascus. Moses found himself leading. Paul found himself loving. Deborah found herself judging. You find yourself superachieving, at least for the moment, and *you* had nothing to do with it. "It was not I," Paul exclaimed, "but the grace of God" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

You know it is being because you know it is the opposite of anything *you* would ever be doing. You *find* yourself doing it. You are bound so tightly to your opposite that you find yourself, at last, doing what you are rather than being what you do. You are astounded at what you are doing. How many times have we heard people say, heard *ourselves* say, "Who ever would have thought *I* could have done this?" "Six months ago I wouldn't have been caught dead doing this." You might even be studying the Bible. You might be sharing feelings or thoughts. You might be embracing someone who is your opposite in age, status, race. You might simply be affirming that you feel good about yourself—"OK," "actualized," "mobilized," "positive." None of them "big" things, but none of them things *you* could ever have done for yourself.

You might even hear yourself praying. "That wasn't me," you say later, in retrospect, incredulous. You bet it was you. It was the lost part of you speaking. The 51 percent. The still small voice speaking through your still small voice. You might even be crying. But they will be tears of joy. Because your despair will be giving way to hope. You will find yourself hoping. Your fear will be giving way to love. You will find yourself loving. You will find yourself reaching out and touching the people next to you. It will be the angel's touch. Because you are whole at last. You are in touch with your very soul. Your soul is in touch with you.

#### Footnote

1. S. Terrien, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), vol. 2, p. 258.

# **17**

## **THE REJECTED ACCEPTS**

THINGS ARE HAPPENING to us all the time over which we have no control. It is the opposite of what most of us achievers want. We want to be in control at all times—on top, powerful. Therefore the possibility of God is immense. The key to wholeness is to see the hand of God in what happens. "I am he who causes to happen what happens," God described himself to Moses when he revealed his name (Exodus 3:14). "I am he who causes to be what comes into existence." Grace is what happens to us. Faith is our response to what happens. Works are what then happen through us.

There is a story that goes back to 400 B.C. It tells about a time around 1100 B.C. It tells about what happened to two people. It has been called by many an example of the perfect story. And the reason such superlatives are used is that the story connects poignantly with our history. What happened to them happens to us.

### **I**

It all began in something over which they had no control. The story is thus an ideal type for achievers on their way to superachieving. It begins in a crisis where self-reliance does not work. It begins in helplessness, in famine. The famine was so bad that Naomi and her husband had to leave the country. They went to the neighboring country of Moab. There Naomi's husband died. After his death, her two sons married. Then they too died. And

Naomi was left alone with her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. Orpah decided to stay in Moab. Naomi went back to Judah. And Ruth went with her.

What began in famine ended in death. You can't have much less control over something than that. And what the story is reminding us of is that, among other things, such events have come or will come to all of us. The key to the psychological process of wholeness is what we do with such events when they happen. How we "handle" them. How we respond.

Naomi had lost everything, and her reaction was what you might expect. "The hand of the Lord has gone forth against me," she said (Ruth 1:13). "Call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20), the word *mara* meaning bitter. "Why call me Naomi," which means joy, "when the Lord has afflicted me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" (Ruth 1:21). "I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty" (Ruth 1:21). When your husband and children have died, we can certainly understand that response.

Which makes the response of Ruth all the more remarkable. She too had lost her husband, and she had no children. But there is not a hint of bitterness in the story about how Ruth reacted to the events over which she had no control. She did the following things. The following things worked for her. And in what worked, we see her faith. Which means we get some "handles" from the storyteller for our own faith and works.

## II

In the first place, Ruth accepted what happened to her. It is the old story about achievers being in touch with what is happening to them beyond their doing. Beyond the things which they control. Beyond what they achieve. The word *accept* comes from the root to "take to oneself." And it is one of the most difficult things any of us has to do. To be able to say that what has happened has happened, and to get on with life, is to have hold of a power which is so great that we can only say it is a power which has hold of us. God *is* what enables us to accept what happens to us. God *is* what enables us to "take it to ourselves."

I am not at all sanguine about my own ability to do this sort of thing. And yet I take great heart from those I know who have

done it. We all know people who have accepted loss and have gotten on with life. Whenever I come even close to acceptance, I know it is God, because it can't be me.

And then, of course, there are all the other losses. Death is simply the ultimate, but every day there are the proximate. The loss of a close relationship. The loss of a self-help goal. The loss of a friend who moves away. The loss of a contract. The loss of a sale. The church is the place where achievers practice the acceptance of loss. Where they get in touch with their hurt. Where their hurt gets in touch with them.

What it comes down to is my acceptance of the lost parts of myself. If I can do that, then I can accept the loss of a loved one. Ruth has always struck me as the kind of person who could do that. She didn't die when her husband died. And the reason, it seems to me, is that she was in touch with the lost parts of herself that long ago could have died, but didn't. She is one of the most "together" people in the Bible. She is a whole person. There isn't a partial word about her. This is not to lift her up as a paragon. It is simply to suggest that she had worked through a lot. She had come to accept herself, even her negative emotions.

And the way she came to do that must have been through other people. Perhaps even Naomi. Self-acceptance is next-to-impossible without acceptance by others. When I love you just as you are, that enables you to be who you want to become. It frees you to achieve. It frees you to be yourself. When I am loved just as I am, that enables me to accept the lost parts of myself that I don't love, that I am having such trouble getting in touch with, that are having such trouble getting in touch with me. Proof is when something happens to me over which I have no control, and I react with bitterness. "Call me Mara." My reaction reveals a lost part of me that I am not yet in touch with, that is not yet in touch with me. Whereas if I react by accepting it, it reveals that I am in touch, that I can accept the event because I accept myself.

The church is the place where we work on this kind of acceptance. We work on our ability to accept each other just as we are. That gives each of us in turn the ability to accept ourselves just as we are. And that is what is passed on to our children and fellow employees.

## III

Which leads to a second reaction on Ruth's part to the events over which she had no control. Note that she did have control over how she reacted. Just as Naomi did, and we all do. We do not choose how we feel. We do choose how we act. More accurately, we choose how we re-act to how we feel. Ruth was sad. She wept (Ruth 1:14). So did her sister-in-law. Ruth went with Naomi, however, while Orpah did not. Her emotion moved her, as we say, to go. She was in touch with what her inner self, her being, coming to her on her emotion, was telling her to do.

We control what we do. We do not control what we are. When we do what we are, we are in touch with the inner self. We are on our way to wholeness. When we are what we do, we are out of touch with our inner self. We are incomplete. The Bible writer chose to tell the story of Ruth, who went on to do great things. Orpah is never heard from again. We can only infer that, when we are moved to do things we had never dreamed would be possible, that is when we are in touch with our emotions, hear what they are saying to us, and do not treat them as "erroneous zones" which, in our foolishness, the cardinal sin for Greeks, we have "chosen." Note the passive. We are moved. We give no credit to our own doing even though, paradoxically, we choose to do it. "This is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Our emotions choose us. We do not choose our emotions. Our emotions come as things happen to us. What is happening to us is grace. Faith is our response to what happens. Works are what then happen through us. Works are what we are moved to do by faith. Faith is our response to grace. Something happens to us.<sup>1</sup> It prompts a feeling. We act on what we feel. Can you choose your feeling if your child gets killed? Of course not. We are *not* responsible for how we feel. We *are* responsible for how we behave. We *can* choose our response to how we feel. That is the choice Orpah and Naomi had. We can choose how we play the feeling out. We can choose what we are going to *do* about how we feel. We can choose either to accept what the feeling is telling us to do, or we can choose to reject the feeling by calling it an "erroneous zone." We can put it down by calling it "negative thinking." And it is too bad when we do that because



we miss our humanity. We miss the very thing we were aiming at. We "miss the mark," the Greek root for "sin." We miss wholeness. The self-helpers miss the very target they purport to hit.

Ruth chose to accept Naomi's inability to accept what had happened to her. Ruth hung in there with Naomi. She carried self-acceptance into other acceptance. She did not reject the other because the other could not accept herself. She stayed with her. In one of the most dramatic parts of the Bible, they come to the turning point, the "crisis," and Naomi tells her two daughters-in-law to turn back and stay with their own people, the Moabites, while she returns to her people, the Judahites. But Ruth says:

Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried (Ruth 1:16-17).

It was a type of the psychological process. Ruth was going to stick with Naomi because Naomi, like the prodigal son, had not yet come to herself. She was not yet helpless. She was not yet in touch with what had happened to her. So she was leaving Moab a defeated woman. "Call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty" (Ruth 1:20-21). Ruth would go with her to be with her. She would provide the ambiance for the miracle of healing to take place. The miracle of growth. The miracle of becoming the person she was meant to be. She would even leave her own country. "You left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before," an incredulous Boaz exclaims (Ruth 2:11). It wasn't a sacrifice. It wasn't a duty. "Count it all joy, my brethren," an early Christian wrote, "when you meet various trials" (James 1:2).

It was love. Love doesn't know anything about duty or sacrifice. Love only knows about accepting the other just as she is. Because the lover knows that she is accepted just as she is. That is faith. Faith is accepting the fact that you are accepted. That is the psychological process. And it is hard for achievers because it is hard for them to accept who they are. They could always achieve more. But this is how revelation comes. It is how we are bound back to ourselves. When we accept the fact that we are accepted just as we are, then we find ourselves with the power to

accept other people just as they are. And even more than that, we find ourselves sticking with them. The religious person is the person who sticks with you. Who goes with you into a far country. Who even leaves his or her own home, when the timing is right, to help create a home for you. Where you can grow. Where through his or her love you can be bound back to yourself. Where you can be whole at last.

It was so revealing that the story writer put it in terms of a foreigner. It was a symbol of oppositeness. Ruth was from Moab, Naomi from Judah. She wasn't even a Hebrew. She wasn't even from the same country. That was the point. That she would leave everything for the one big thing. And the one big thing was to love the other just as she was. In her bitterness. In her rejection. In her projection onto God of all the hurt in Naomi. The one big thing was not to leave her alone under the tree at the crossroads.

It even went a step further, not only in "sacrifice" of the self but in acceptance of the other. Ruth was not only in a foreign country now, she was defenseless, helpless.<sup>2</sup> Widows were dependent on the kindness of their families—and she had no family.<sup>3</sup> They were back in Moab. And she had never had any children. So with neither family nor children to care for her, she had become vulnerable. That is what love does. It becomes vulnerable. It is the psychological way of *kenosis*, as we have seen. It is out there, unprotected. It can even be crucified.

And no, it is not a sacrifice. It is not beating yourself down in order to raise someone else up. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials . . . That you may be *complete*, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2,4). You go out in love, into whatever far country, because you want to be whole. You want to be complete. You want to lack nothing before you, too, die. You accept the other because you accept yourself. And other than that you have no idea where it will lead, where you will be led.

Achievers who are so in touch with the rest of who they are that they can love, have no idea where that love will lead them. They are vulnerable, a dangerous thing for achievers. They are unplanned, spontaneous, led—all high-risk for achievers, but all high-God for superachievers. The church is the place where, in the safety of the beloved community, we experiment in being led. If your church knows where it's going, it isn't a church. Not yet.

It is still leading, which is active and self-helped, rather than being led, which is passive and God-helped.

#### IV

Which leads to a third thing to be said about Ruth. She had no idea what would happen. She was open to the process. That is what happens when you accept to the point of vulnerability. Anything can happen. You can't predict the process. Religion is what you can't predict. Religion is what happens to you that you never dreamed would happen. Religion is finding yourself going to a far country because of your love for somebody and being open to what happens. Ruth married, had children, and became the great-grandmother of King David. Jesus was killed. You have no idea what is going to happen.

But it does not matter. Because what happens is in God's hands. Again, you have no control. Just as the crisis which devastated you, your own loss or a loved one's death, was not in your control, so what happens now in the psychological process is out of your control. The minute you try to control it, look out. Because that is the demonic in your life. That is the sin against the Holy Spirit. "Get thee behind me, Satan," Jesus said to Peter (Matthew 16:23), because Peter was obstructing the religious process of acceptance. He was breaking up the church. He was putting that rock in the path of self-fulfillment. He was trying to self-help Jesus out of his dilemma.

Anything that gets in the way of self- and other-acceptance has to go. Because it is an attempt to play God. It is a "Greek" self-help attempt to control the work of the Holy Spirit. "The Lord recompense you for what you have done," Boaz said to Ruth, "and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" (Ruth 2:12). In total vulnerability, she was relying on God. She was relying solely on the accepting process which she had started, which God had started so mysteriously in her.

It is exactly what happened to Moses and Elijah and Paul and Jesus. All the props were knocked out. They *had* to rely solely on God for the psychological process of wholeness to happen. God is what I rely on when I can no longer rely on myself. If only it did not take such enormous loss to accept the

fact that I am accepted. To accept the fact that going 49 percent of the way to wholeness is not equal to 100 percent. To accept the fact that even if I go 0 percent of the way, I can still go 100 percent, because *the way comes to me*.

Why is the acceptance of cataclysmic events necessary to the acceptance of self and of others? It isn't. Not always. Not for everyone. But for achievers it often is. Because when I am an achiever I can handle everything. I am in control. And it is often only through the pain of incalculable loss that I can *be* controlled and so be bound back to the rest of who I am.

The acceptance of a Ruth in your life is binding you back to who you are. Somewhere along the line, in your first or a subsequent family or a church family or somewhere, there is, hopefully, someone who loves you so much that he or she will stick with you, in whatever far country, for one, two, ten, thirty years, however long it takes for you to come to yourself, and be yourself, and be bound back to who you are, and thus see God.

Each of us is both Ruth and Naomi. Each of us has a Ruth and Naomi within. Religion is seeing the two at the turning point, not parting, but embracing, and walking hand in hand into the next country. Superachiever, who is your Ruth? Who is your Naomi?

#### Footnotes

1. Only a few days before his death, C. G. Jung was asked about his idea of God. He replied: "To this day God is the name by which I designate all things which cross my willful path violently and recklessly, all things which upset my subjective views, plans and intentions and change the course of my life for better or worse." Quoted in E. F. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (New York: Putnam, 1972), p. 101.

2. L. P. Smith in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1953), vol. 2, p. 841.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 836.

# 18

## THE PRISONER ESCAPES

587 B.C. AUGUST. Just before the Babylonians breach the wall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah. Sixty years old. Counseling one course. The princes of the palace counseling another. Zedekiah. King. Thirty-two years old. Achiever. Caught in the middle. Vacillating. The self. Trying to decide between polar opposites. Longing to know what to do. "Is there any word from the Lord?" Zedekiah asks (Jeremiah 37:17).

The princes in my head are always doing battle with the Jeremiah. And there is the king, my ego, first on one side, then on the other, vacillating, longing to do the will of God and not knowing what that will is. Longing, in other words, to be myself and not knowing how to do it. How can I possibly know what God is telling me to do? If I knew, there would be no question about my doing it. Anyone would do the will of the Lord if only they knew what it was. How can I know what it is? The problem of revelation is the central problem of personality. If I knew who I was I would be who I am.

### I

First, you listen to what you have imprisoned and *not* accepted, what you have declared "erroneous." Jeremiah was under arrest. He was imprisoned by the palace guard. The very self that I seek is the very self I have shut up all my life. It is the self that the princes of achievement in my head put down. It is the word

they do not like to hear. It is the word they incarcerate, so they cannot hear it.

What is the word you resist? What is the word that "immobilizes" you? Far from being "erroneous," as we have discovered, it is bringing you the truth about yourself. It is the *Lord*. The word of the Lord comes to us in what imprisons us. In what we imprison. In what we will not hear. In what we revolt against. In what we shut up.

Vincent Van Gogh was immobilized for the first twenty-seven years of his life. He failed at everything. All his jobs. A hoped-for marriage. His own family. If he had not listened to what he had imprisoned, we would never have gotten Vincent Van Gogh. Here is what he wrote his brother:

I tell you what I'm like. I'm like a caged bird. In spring the bird feels there is something for him to do but he can't do it. What? He tries to remember. Then he remembers. He looks about him and cries to himself, "Other birds are making their nests and laying eggs and bringing up their children." He beats his head against the cage, but the cage is all around him, he can't get out. He is maddened by anguish. Another bird flies by. "Look at that idle bird," he says, "living at ease." Children peep into the cage. They feed him. "He has got all he wants," they say. But he looks through the bars and he cries, "I am caged, I am caged! And you tell me I have all I want! Fools! I beg you, set me free to be like other birds."<sup>1</sup>

He listened to what he had imprisoned. Far from being immobilizing, that was *God* in his life. The very thing he had imprisoned was the very thing that was setting him free, that was calling him out to be who he was.

One of our small groups met recently, and we began our meeting by listening to what each of us has imprisoned. It was the same way we had begun our church board meeting the night before. We began in silence. And the silence went on and on and on. Talk about being imprisoned! I began to think this was not my cup of tea. But every now and then the silence would be punctuated by someone speaking. And the words would sparkle. The reason was that each person there was listening to what they had imprisoned that day, perhaps that week, month, year, all their lives. Coincidentally, the group has set itself the task of sharing with each other their "enslavements," and how it is precisely those enslavements, or imprisonings, that are enabling us to grow.

How can I possibly know what God is telling me to do? I can listen to what I have imprisoned. Two years and a few months ago I got a letter in the mail. It was a nice letter, but I basically put it aside. It was from the chairman of the search committee of the church I serve. A total stranger. Winnetka? Who had ever heard of Winnetka? Leave what I was doing? The princes of achievement were riding high. I imprisoned the very thing that would set me free. And then, I do not know why, I took the letter out and answered it. And, the strangers who sent me that letter have become my friends. And the very messenger whom the princes of achievement had put down became, for me, the messenger of God.

## II

How can I possibly know what God is telling me to do? In the second place, I can listen to what I have tried to kill. The princes didn't just imprison Jeremiah. They tried to kill him. They dropped him into a cistern so he would be out of sight and out of mind and eventually die. When the princes of achievement get going in my head, they end up very often doing more than just imprisoning my inmost thought. They try to eliminate it from my head for good. Because it is a thought which is the opposite of what they are thinking.

Wonder of wonders, this is a productive field for God. It is a battle ground, and when the battle appears to be lost is often the time when it is being won. Those negative emotions in our lives which we repress almost to the point of extinction are the very things which are saving us, which are bringing us wholeness, which, out of the field of battle in our heads, are bringing us peace. Far from being erroneous, they are the truth that alone will heal us, set us free.

What is it you have repressed to the point of suppression? What feeling? What thought? It is your savior. It is what is coming to you to heal you. I was in Europe once, and I will never forget visiting an *oubliet*, a bottle dungeon, a huge cell into which you would be dropped and from which you could never escape. And as I think of all the Jeremiahs I am forever dropping into the bottle dungeons of my life, it makes me wonder: Is it not possible that the very thing I avoid the most is the very thing that is bringing me

me? And is it not when I "come to myself," as the prodigal son, that I know God? That I know what God is telling me to do?

A tragedy occurred in our community not long ago. A young man went off to college, and it proved too much for him, and he lay down before a train. "I'm sorry," he wrote in the note which he left for his parents. "School here is too hard. I'd never be able to do well, and you would have been disappointed. I have been unhappy with my life, so I just want to rest in peace." If only he could have seen, if only he could have heard, that it was the very thing he had suppressed that was bringing him wholeness, that was bringing him life, that was bringing him the peace for which he longed.

There is a war in my members we have seen Paul say (Romans 7:23). "The good that I would I do not. The evil that I would not that I do" (Romans 7:19, KJV). The princes of achievement had imprisoned the real Paul, the rest of Paul, the 51 percent Paul. They had tried to eliminate him. He was projecting the cistern by throwing Christians in jail. He even stood by while they were killed. Then it happened. By the side of the road. It all came together. What he had suppressed, in a violent and dramatic moment became expressed. He became who he was. The Jeremiah of his inner self was rescued, and the princes of his outer self were put to flight. That is, they were kept in their 49 percent place and were not allowed to masquerade as 100 percent.

Ebed-melech. A foreigner like Ruth, an opposite, an instinctive negative. An Ethiopian. A stranger. Rescued Jeremiah. Annanias. A stranger. A Christian. Rescued Paul. He made a church for him "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I" (Matthew 18:20). He helped him express what for years he had suppressed. The very part of himself that Paul had tried to kill, was the very part that was leading him to Christ, that was setting him free, that was making him whole. That is what "being led to Christ means." That is not *all* it means, but it means at least that. It means that your inner self is freed to embrace your outer self. Accepting Christ means that you accept yourself. You are accepted by the very self, your Christ-self, your 51 percent self, which you had imprisoned as "negative," as "erroneous."



The side of ourselves that achievers tend to suppress is their feeling side. Feelings get in the way of thoughts. And if you are destined to think great thoughts in life, it will be hard at the same time to feel great feelings. Consequently, I know that the more I am in touch with my feeling side, the closer I am to the peace about which the young man wrote. My feeling side is released from the cistern of my intellect by my church. My church and my house church and my family and certain friends are those who love me so much that they want to help me in the birth of my new life, in my rebirth, in my being born again. They are Annanias for me. They are Ebed-melech. They are Ruth to my Naomi. They are those who know that, without them, I may well drop my Jeremiah out of sight and out of mind. And they do not want that to happen. Because they love me too much. And I do not want it to happen to them. Because I love them, too. "I could be freed simply," Van Gogh wrote. "A deep, serious affection—that opens the doors of the prison cage. Friends, brothers, being loved—this supreme power, this magic force opens the doors."<sup>2</sup>

### III

How can I possibly know what *God* is telling me to do? I can listen to what I lock up. I can listen to what I seek to erase. And since these two things do not always work, I can listen to my fall that comes when I do not listen. Within weeks, Jerusalem fell. 587 B.C. is a date known in every Jewish home in the world. Because they would not listen to what they had repressed and then suppressed, they fell. And the confused, vacillating king, Zedekiah, fell with them.

The city was broken into on the ninth of the month, and the king saw and all the soldiers, and they fled and went out of the city by night . . . But the Chaldean army pursued King Zedekiah and overtook him in the steppes of Jericho . . . (And) they captured the king and took him up to the king of Babylon (Jeremiah 52:7-9, KJV).

It all began in the so-called fall of man, which was a result of not listening. And each of us can think back to those times when we, too, have fallen because we, too, have not listened. The fall, far from immobilizing us, is precisely what *is* mobilizing us to know at last what *God* is calling us to do. That call *is* my self be-

ing born. It is *me*. And it would never have come if I had thought of my crisis as my "erroneous" self from which to escape rather than my true self struggling to be born.

What is that time in your life when you fell the hardest? When you failed to listen to what you had repressed and then suppressed? So it rose up and depressed you. Depression is what comes with a fall. Are you depressed now? Depression is a sure sign that we have not listened. But it is also a sign that we *are being saved* by the very thing we avoided and sought to eliminate. Our depression is a gift, grace. It is giving us ourselves. It is bringing me *me*. And what more of God can I know than that? Yes, Van Gogh committed suicide. He chose to let suppression erupt in a final moment of violence. Yes, Zedekiah was defeated and blinded and died in chains. That is what can happen when we do not learn from what has befallen us. When we do not listen at our turning point.

Back and forth, back and forth, the palace princes do battle with the Jeremiah within. Time and again we do not listen to our Jeremiah within, to what we repress and suppress. Time and again we fall.

The fall is a summons to listen. To start listening for perhaps the first time in our lives. A.D. 1977, August. A phone call comes. It is a friend from church. He has been through everything. He is acknowledging his fall. *His* fall. Not the fall of man in general. But his. It is at that moment that he begins to rise. That he begins to listen. That he moves into fellowship with others in his church who have fallen too, and who are now listening with every fiber in their bodies. Who know that you can't bootstrap your way to personal growth.

#### Footnotes

1. L. and E. Hanson, *Passionate Pilgrim* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 57.

2. *Idem*.

# 19

## THE EMPTINESS FILLS

SO OFTEN WE HEAR ourselves saying, How can I possibly get hold of the whole life? I have all these friends whose lives have changed, and here I am being left behind. They have hold of something I want, and I want to know how to get it. Sure, there is nothing cataclysmic going on. They are just the same old everyday friends. But still, there is a difference.

### I

One thing we can do to get hold of the new life is to realize we can do nothing. And that, of course, is a very hard thing for most of us to do because we were raised on what Thomas Carlyle called Emerson's "chirpy optimism," which assures us that whatever we want we can go out and get. It was around 500 B.C., eighty-seven years after Jeremiah, and the Israelites were in a bad way. They were in exile in Babylon and there was some question whether they would ever return. Talk about being depressed. This is where their can-do, self-help frontier theology had landed them. "They rebelled," the Isaiah writer writes, "and grieved his holy spirit" (63:10). This was the opposite of the can't-do theology of Paul who said, "When I am weak, then I am strong," who even went so far as to say, "I am nothing" (2 Corinthians 12:10, 11).

All of which seems to suggest that maybe there is one thing we *can* do to achieve wholeness before we realize we can do nothing. And that is to give its *achievement* everything we have, as Paul did. Maybe that is the only way we can ever realize that all our

efforts add up to nothing or, at the most, to only 49 percent, depending on how you want to score it. "By the grace of God I am what I am," Paul wrote (1 Corinthians 15:10). Not by the grace of what I have done. He scored it zero. Maybe we have to pull out all the self-help books and try all the latest psychology and give it all we have before we can ever realize that we have nothing to give. That all our efforts add up to nothing. That we are in exile from the rest of who we are. That our depression is reminding us we are far from home. "By grace you have been saved through faith," the Ephesians writer wrote, "and this is *not* your own doing, it is the gift of God" (2:8).

## II

A second thing we can do, then, to get hold of wholeness, is to realize *it* is getting hold of *us* all the time. Even in what we do to try to achieve the whole life on our own. That *is* grace. God *is* whatever gets me to realize that I cannot realize myself. That I cannot bring about my own wholeness. That I cannot achieve my own rebirth any more than I could achieve my own physical birth. And if I have to go through all sorts of running around from this book to that, and this therapy to that, and this group of friends to that, fine. That is the way I *have* to go to realize that all my works add up to nothing. That I am still in exile. Not always, of course, but often. I am still far from home. I am not yet at one with who I am. And when I come to the end of my string, perhaps that is the first time I can feel the pull of God's string.

"The new heaven and the new earth which *I* will make," God said through the exiled writer of Isaiah (66:22). Not you but me. *I* am the creator and *I* am the recreator. God's activity, my passivity. There is nothing we can do that is ever going to get hold of the whole life for us. Because all such self-help is simply good old works theology in modern dress. All I am is a modern Pharisee who feels he can work his way to God rather than a modern Paul who quit being a Pharisee because he realized at last that it was God, all along, who was working his way to him. Even, believe it or not, in his works. He *had* to go through all his works to realize that his works didn't work. We have to do everything to realize we can do nothing, to realize that, if we are ever going to come out of

exile, it has to be God who leads us, God who gives us the new heaven and the new earth, God who gives me the new me. God *is* what brings me fresh evidence of the new life in my life. And that evidence *is* coming all the time. If only I have the eyes to see and the ears to hear in my crises, in my helplessness.

### III

A third thing we can do, then, to get hold of the new life—that is to say, a third thing we can do to realize the new life is getting hold of us—is to be in touch with what is going on in our own lives. It is to be in touch with what is touching us. And that is where we need the church. Because we just are not that sensitive on our own. The church are the people who remind each other that it is God who is touching their lives, that whatever is touching their lives *is* God. You cannot always get that kind of assurance alone under a tree with a self-help book.

“Just another ho-hum Sunday,” my church friend said as he looked up from prayer around noon. He says it nearly every Sunday. Joking, of course. And others are picking it up. It is becoming almost a byword, as people dry their eyes after the prayer and go down the hall hugging each other and inviting total strangers over for lunch.

There was a time when he would never have said it. He wasn’t even in church. And then it happened. I have no idea why. But the Damascus Road came for him as it did for Paul. The new heaven and the new earth were created for one lonely man in exile. He has been irrepressible ever since. He can’t get enough of Sunday, or during the week, or reading the Bible, or being with people who hurt, as well as with those who laugh.

Maybe I do have an idea. Maybe this is how we get in touch with what is touching us. His last child has left home. His business is dreary. Athletics have palled. Drink has lost its punch. Nothing dramatic, just another ho-hum Babylonian exile. “What a gift God gave me,” he said to me once. “He got hold of me before I stumbled and fell.”

You can never explain these things. They happen and they do not happen. He was lucky, at least from one point of view. From another, perhaps not. “You turn me off,” he told me one of his

friends said to him, "when you talk about all this religious stuff." His friend doesn't need it. The right constellation of events has not yet occurred for him. Perhaps it never will.

On the other hand, this sort of thing, this constellation, in my friend's life makes it easier for me to believe in grace. He is giving me the gift of putting me in touch with what is touching me when he uses the word *God* to describe his new life. He is being the church for me. Obviously he has had nothing to do with his change. He would be the first to admit it. He was in exile. His change was beyond his control. He did not will it. He did not do anything for it. He was just living out his life. And then it happened. The timing was right. Grace is what happens to us. Faith is our response to what happens. Works are what then happen through us.

Obviously the response is all. Why did the one man respond and the other not? We'll never know. "At the right time, Christ died for . . . us" (Romans 5:6-8). That is all we will ever know.

#### IV

But that is not enough. I cannot leave it at that. It is like chalk the wrong way on a blackboard to leave it there. I want to know why the one man responds and the other does not. Maybe it is just the old achieving thing all over again for me. Maybe I can't ever know. But maybe I can know more than I knew. Surely the key to wholeness is to know why some people are born to the new life and others, even their close friends, are not. With the key you can then go out and unlock life after life. All the caged birds of the last chapter can be free. "For freedom Christ has set us free," one of the world's great achievers exclaimed (Galatians 5:1).

So, the fourth thing we can do to get hold of the new life is to realize that Christ had a key. My friend is having the time of his life with his new life because, as he puts it, "Christ has come into my life." At the right time, Christ died for *him*. His children left, his business dragged. There's something in that. Not necessarily in the specifics because they will be different for everyone. But something in the timing, in the constellation of events. "*While we were yet helpless*, at the right time, Christ died for . . . us." What made the timing right? My friend thanks God that God came into his life before he "stumbled and fell." But the

leaving and the dragging and whatever else *were* a fall of a sort. They brought an emptiness. A lack. A void, as we say, a feeling of helplessness. When the last child leaves, more than just the house is empty. The key, then, to my new life is somewhere in this emptiness. When life is full, there is little room for Christ. But when I am an empty pitcher waiting to be filled, then there is room.

Jesus emptied himself. He modelled the key. We, of course, won't do that. No one deliberately chooses emptiness. Therefore we have to *be* emptied. By the children leaving. By the business dragging. Athletics palling. Grace *is* what empties us. It is whatever happens to us that depletes us. That *is* God in our lives. When the Israelites were exiled that *was* God in their lives. That *was* God making the new heaven and the new earth. They heard that. They were in touch with it. Because it is only as we are emptied that we can begin to be filled.

## V

And that is the other side of grace. It is not just the emptying but the filling. "That you may be filled," wrote an early seeker of the key, "with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). As we are emptied, we can begin to be filled. That is what makes, as we have seen, the emptyings far more than "erroneous zones." It makes them truth zones. They are bringing us the truth of who we are. Some, like my church friend, have to be emptied only a little. Your last child leaving is an emptying, to be sure, but, compared with other emptyings, it is not, perhaps, so great. Others have to be emptied further, as in a divorce, or alcoholism, or loss of a job or a loved one. It all depends on the individual, what his or her exile must be. We cannot prescribe. We can only describe. That is why, when my friend talks to his friend about "religious stuff," his friend does not respond. His children, too, have grown and gone. But that, apparently, is not enough. Grace has not emptied him enough. So he has not yet begun to be filled.

And that, of course, is what causes the frustration. That, as one of us begins to be filled, the other of us is still being emptied. It is like two escalators at a department store, the one going up and the other down. You long to have your friend, your spouse, your child, your parent going up with you on the same escalator. And when that happens it is beautiful. But it is not always to be. Per-

haps it is only rarely to be. All we can do is wait and, of course, shout with the exhilaration of the ride. That is why "Just another ho-hum Sunday" is laughingly on the lips of many in my church friend's church. If that turns others off because it is talking about "religious stuff," so be it. Surely it is no more a turn-off than my friend's friend talking about non-religious stuff. Surely the exhilaration of going up is as worthy of mention as the exhilaration—I'm sure his friend would call it that—of going down.

## VI

True, his friend would not call it "going down." He would simply say he was having fun in his life doing what he was doing. It is only in retrospect that we see we were being emptied and filled. The Isaiah writer wrote long after Jerusalem fell. He was looking back. That is when he saw the hand of God. That is when he got in touch with what was touching him. How can I possibly get hold of the new life? I can look back, each day, over the old one and be nonplussed. It is as though I were walking down a street and heard my name called from an open window and turned and looked and God was there.

Wholeness is in retrospect. And it is only sometimes after the last child has left that we can begin to see what a gift the last child has given us. Only as we lose life do we find it (Mark 8:35). Only as we are emptied, do we begin to be filled. Only as we are exiled after we, too, have fallen, do we begin to see that the crucified, fully emptied one is, indeed, the risen Lord, who fills us with all the fullness of God.



# 20

## THE WHOLENESS COMES

ONE OF THE MOST exciting things about the whole life is the way in which grace abounds. A friend came up to me not long ago and described his new life in Christ as "grace abounding." "Grace abounded," St. Paul wrote (Romans 5:20). "God," wrote the Hebrews writer, ". . . working in you that which is pleasing in his sight" (13:20-21).

### I

"Working in you"—that is the key to grace. Grace is not something I do. It is not something I achieve. It is done for me. It is achieved through me. It is not achieved by me. And that is where the power is in my life. When something is achieved through me rather than by me that is when I move in my life—that is when I am moved—from achieving to superachieving, from active to passive living.

What is grace? Grace is wholeness. And wholeness, to summarize, is not something I achieve. It has to be achieved for me. It is being achieved for me in my negative emotions. They are what are bringing me grace. They are bringing me wholeness. They are "moving" my inner self "out" to embrace my outer self. I do not choose my negative emotions. My negative emotions choose me. They are the rest of me, in the psychological process, binding me back to who I am. They are my opposite coming to me. They are my inner self which I do not control merging with my outer self which I do control. They are the passive part of me

moving on the active. I find myself being moved. I find myself being made whole. I find myself being completed.

Now, this is not to say that positive emotions cannot do the same thing. They are doing it all the time. The difference is that we tend to be much more in touch with our positive than our negative emotions. We accept them readily. It is easy to accept good feelings. Sunrise emotions of joy and laughter are easy to accept. But sunset emotions of sadness and tears are much harder to accept. That is why we say they are accepting us. We tend to reject them. We run from them. We hide them. We repress them. We call them "erroneous zones."

What we fail to realize is that they are the rest of ourselves getting in touch with ourselves. They are the 51 percent of ourselves that we have not yet explored. They are the bridge to the rest of who we are. They are the rest of ourselves walking over that bridge to be at one with our can-do, achieving, active self. These are the can't-do, superachieving, passive parts of ourselves bringing us wholeness. Bringing us grace. Bringing us God. God walks across that bridge as I am bound back to who I am. God is what binds me back to the rest of who I am.

Why 51 percent? Because this is where the power is. My friend saying "Grace abounding" knows that something has come into his life greater than he is. This is not to deny who he is. It is to affirm him with greater affirmation than ever. Maybe that is why he is irrepressible.

## II

Now, of course, the condition does not last. If you think my friend is radiant all the time, all you have to do is check with his wife. But the fact remains that he has at last come in touch with the lost parts of his own personality by accepting his negative emotions. In his case, the negative emotions of guilt and dread. They have come in touch with him. He *is* irrepressible—not always, but often. And the reason for his radiance is intriguing. It goes back to the people in the Bible. My friend has gotten himself out of the way. He has stopped being his own devil. He has stopped trying to self-help his wholeness. He has stopped putting down his negative emotions as "erroneous." How he did it we will never know. He will never know. That is why he says

God did it. No psychological test could ever determine how it happened. But, at the right time, the right constellation of negative emotions occurred so that God could walk over that bridge, and my friend could be at one with who he was.

He got himself out of the way. That is what Jesus meant when he said, "If any man would come after me let him deny himself" (Mark 8:34). Coleridge talked about "that willing suspension of disbelief that alone constitutes poetic faith." We are talking about that willing suspension of the active, partial self that alone lets the passive, rest of the self walk across the bridge. And the key to the walk is exactly how much will is involved. My friend would say zero. And that is the wisdom of retrospect. As we have seen, wholeness *is* in retrospect. But it is also in prospect, and for those who have not had the experience, is there not something to be done to help along "the right constellation of events"? Is there not some way we can get ourselves out of the way in order for grace to come? Is there not some way we can ease back on the active self so that the passive self, bringing with it the wholeness for which we long, can walk across that bridge?

### III

The writer to the Hebrews was writing at the time of the fiercest persecution in the history of the early church. It was under the emperor Domitian around the year A.D. 90. They were helpless, out of control. Anything could happen. Often it did. The letter is a hymn of praise to grace abounding.

Grace will never abound until we are out of control. You will never experience wholeness until you are out of control. Everyone who has had such an experience will say, "Amen." Everyone who has not had such an experience will say, "You've got to be kidding." I heard a startling prayer in a group not long ago. It came from a businessman who is highly placed in his firm. And in his prayer he said, "It's a strange feeling, God, but I'm wrestling with the one I'm trying to love." And he meant not his wife, but his Lord. We wrestle because we do not want to give up control. We wrestle because we do not want to admit that there is one or another area of our life which we do not control. We are 49 percenters. And we are good at it. We're achievers.

We're highly placed. We know how to do a job. And if there's an area of our life in which we are not doing a job, we'll do it. We'll wrestle.

Fine. The wrestling is the bridging. It goes all the way back to Jacob, wrestling with God on the banks of the river Jabbok (Genesis 32:22-32). Jacob was an achiever, too. My praying friend is a modern Jacob. God is wrestling with him. His struggle is the lost part of himself getting in touch with himself. In his case, his lost part is his feeling side. As he struggles to get his feelings out in his prayers, something is happening to him. God is coming to him. God *is* as his lost part finding him, touching him. He touched a chord in all of us who were praying with him because he was being touched. The angel touched Jacob, and Jacob went off limping because of his thigh.

So what had my friend done? Because, being achievers, we have to do, of course. That's the way we were brought up. All he had done, but it was a lot, was to get his active self out of the way and listen to what his passive self was saying to him. He was in touch with what was touching him. He had stopped for a moment putting his active self up as a wall and was instead putting it down as a bridge. That is the prayer process. That is what goes on in prayer. Prayer is how we are in touch with what is touching us. No, it is not the only way, as we have seen, but it is one way, and an important one. All they did after Jesus died was pray. That is *all* they did. "They went up to the upper room . . . (and) with one accord devoted themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:13-14). Period. It is how to be in touch with what is touching us. If you have to "do" something, pray.

But even then, would we say *we* were doing it? I doubt it. "An angel wrestled with him" the story says (Genesis 32:24). It does not say Jacob wrestled with an angel. Whenever I pray it has to be God, it can't be me, because I wouldn't pray that much. I wouldn't pray *at all*. Achievers don't bow their heads. They hold their heads high. Even prayer is grace. "I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

#### IV

And look who they prayed with. They didn't pray alone. My

friend was praying with other people. There is something in that. A dejected group of twenty or thirty in an upper room. Talk about negative emotions! A frightened group awaiting persecution under Domitian. Helpless. Out of control. Look who they were praying with. The church are the people who know that they can be touched more often together than alone. They know you can't achieve wholeness alone under a tree. They know you can't bootstrap your way to wholeness. How do they know that? Because of history. The early Christians proved it. Because of their own history. Their own lives prove it. They know they grow best with and through other people. The church are the people who pray with one another in order to be in touch with what is touching them.

That is how we move from achieving to superachieving. Talk about a businessman. One was part owner of a fishing business. Another worked for the IRS. Another was a laborer. Another a homemaker. Talk about superachieving. Talk about "turning the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). We, too, are being moved from achieving to superachieving. We, too, are being moved from partial to whole life. We, too, are being moved to prayer, and prayer is a key to the power that is waiting for us, on the other side of the bridge, the 51 percent of ourselves that we have not even begun to explore because we are so mesmerized by our own achievements that we never dreamed superachieving would be possible.

Talk about negative emotions. It was toward the end of Jesus' life. He had to decide whether to end it. That is a decision most of us do not have to make. Talk about being in touch with what was touching him. Talk about wrestling. "He prayed," the book about him says (Luke 22:41). "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). And then he went out and did the most powerful work in the history of the world. Only *he* didn't *do* it. *God* did it *through* him—which is nonsense to the active self in prospect, but wisdom to all wrestling, passive selves in retrospect.

Jesus is the one who said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Jesus modelled passive as well as active living. Jesus modelled the 51 as well as the 49

percent. *He* is the power that empowers us to pray. *He* is the power that empowers us to wrestle. "You have come to fulness of life in him" (Colossians 2:10), wrote a stunned, shocked, powerful early Christian who found himself suddenly turned from an everyday achiever into a superachiever who turned the world upside down. Who found himself crossing bridge after bridge of persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword (Romans 8:35), with the irrepressible good news that was on all their lips, "From his fulness have we all received grace upon grace" (John 1:16). Grace abounding. Wholeness at last.

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